

solidarity

FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION

No.11 JAN.- FEB.1980

20p



With Special Supplement

about ourselves

SOLIDARITY is a libertarian communist organisation comprising autonomous groups and individuals. The political basis of membership is general agreement with our 'As We See It' and 'As We Don't See It' publications. Members are expected to contribute financially to the organisation and to actively propagate Solidarity politics in the class struggle.

Our organisation is open and democratic and members have full scope to express differing ideas within the agreed political basis of membership.

The editing and production of the magazine is rotated between different, geographically separated groups in line with this approach and in an effort to share skills and develop the strength of the organisation as a whole.

Whilst our members actively intervene, individually and collectively, in areas of the class struggle ranging from sexual liberation to strikes and occupations, our aim is not to impose ourselves as leaders, but to assist in clarifying political issues and strengthening the self-reliance and independence of our fellow workers. We recognise that we also have much to learn in this process.

If you have read 'As We Don't See It', generally agree with the politics outlined there and are interested in joining Solidarity, then write to the Secretary c/o Manchester group, for further details.

PUBLICATION POLICY

Acceptance of articles and letters depends on a variety of factors including their length (they could be too long or too short in relation to the subject they are attempting to cover), clearness of expression, topicality, recent coverage in other editions of the magazine and so on.

We try to avoid publishing articles full of unnecessary jargon, although this consideration is sometimes ignored where we consider that it contains important ideas.

We do accept articles written by sympathetic non-members and writers of long letters are asked to consider writing articles instead. Letters should generally be kept short and precise, otherwise they are likely to be edited.

Articles and letters not published in one edition are passed on to the group producing the next edition, so even if your contribution is not published in the end, it will receive a wide circulation within the group.

NOTE: While the contents of this magazine generally reflect the politics of the group, articles signed by individuals don't necessarily represent the views of all members.

NEW PAMPHLETS

THE KRONSTADT UPRISING
BY IDA METT, with an introduction by Murray Bookchin.
Solidarity(London) £1.00.

THE WORKERS OPPOSITION
BY ALEXANDRA KOLLANTAI.
The anti-bureaucratic struggle inside the Bolshevik Party 1919-1920.
Solidarity(London) 75p.

PERSONS UNKNOWN

The trial of six anarchists on 'conspiracy' charges continues amidst a seemingly deliberate media blackout. They still require assistance financial and otherwise.

The London support group have produced an excellent booklet outlining both the personal traumas involved and the political significance of the case, (price approximately 50p).

Write to: 'Persons Unknown'
c/o Box 123, 182 Upper St,
London, N1.

Appeal

In an effort to realise the age old ideal of socialism - the abolition of money, Solidarity is urging you to send your money to us so that we can finance more pamphlets and supplements!

Please send all donations to the Solidarity Treasurer,

John Cowan, (3R)
17 Cheviot Crescent,
Fintry, Dundee,
Scotland.

SOLIDARITY FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION.

Back issues are available for 25p each or £1.75 for the complete set, including postage.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Main Articles</u>
No 1.	Anarchism and Feminism; Highland Fabricators Strike; Official Secrets.
No 2.	NHS-Planning for Chaos; World of Waste; Gilding the Ghetto.
No 3.	ANL-Anal Fixation; Black Youth in Britain; Lebanon-Looting for Peace!
No 4.	The Miniaturisation of the Proletariat; (micro-chips); The Limits of Permissible Discussion:Kolya.
No 5.	Betrayal of Ideals (RAF); Red Therapy; Genetic Manipulation; Contraceptive Abuse.
No 6.	Economic Crisis? Sexual Revolution Betrayed; Ford Spain.
No 7.	Civil Service Exposed; Jonestown - Suicide For Socialism! We Have Ways!
No 8.	State of Emergency - Ghana; Culture in Politics - Iran; Reminiscences of a Chinese Commune.
No 9.	Torment - Keeping it Clean; In search of Ruling Class; Manifesto for Radical Diplomats.
No 10.	Chrysler - Australia; Youth in China; The Tender Trap; Beyond the Fragments.

Write, enclosing a cheque or PO to London or Manchester Groups.

editorial

CAPITALISM & THE STATE

We do not doubt that the Tories are genuine in their intention to de-nationalise certain parts of British industry as part of their attack on public expenditure. We are witnessing the first throes of a government dressed in the garb of a fanatical free enterprise ideology. In their attacks on public expenditure and the social wage, they are continuing along a path already established by the Labour Party in office, but some of their proposed measures are intended to sustain the fervour of their supporters, as much as to provide financial savings.

Now, in opposition, the Labour Left and its various hangers on in the 'Communist' Party and trotskyist groups will be feverishly trying to re-establish the radical credentials of their policies for 'nationalisation plus workers control'.

It is therefore important to realise that the Tories proposals represent the desperation of a section of the ruling class in decline and that despite their attacks on nationalisation, there is no question of there being any historic reversal in the trend towards increasing state involvement in the economy and society in general, towards what we describe as state capitalism. It is therefore an opportune moment to carefully re-state our understanding of the basic nature of capitalism and the world-wide trend towards state capitalism.

The two major motor forces of capitalism are competition between units of capital and the class struggle between workers and capitalists.

The class struggle has been an important influence in the growth of state intervention in economic and social life, since the increasingly social nature of working class demands have obliged an otherwise divided and disparate ruling class to provide some kind of unified response. The only instrument through which they could achieve this has been the state. The growth

of the so-called welfare state has been an outcome of this struggle - on the one hand by workers seeking to achieve higher standards of health and security and on the other hand by capitalists attempting to channel and control working class discontent.

However, in the absence of the class struggle eliminating competition, workers are forced to operate, as are the capitalists, within a tight framework. In effect, the economy within capitalism has attained a relative autonomy.

Competition between units of capital whether they are companies, nation states, economic blocks or even workers co-ops, obliges those controlling the units to continually attempt to increase the exploitation of their workers, to increase the rate and volume of surplus value produced. Since there are both physical and social limits to an absolute increase in exploitation, this is normally achieved by raising productivity, through increasing the volume of fixed to variable capital, eg. machinery to labour. This involves a relatively smaller and smaller workforce, producing a larger and larger volume of commodities. Since it is only labour which actually adds value in the course of production this trend requires constant checks if it is not to be destructive of the whole economic order.

The need in a competitive economy to 'keep ahead' has obliged employers to gather ever larger volumes of capital under their control. In many cases only the state has been big enough and powerful enough to undertake this task. As the units have become larger the problems of internal control have become greater. We have then seen in both private companies and nationalised industries, the growth of vast hierarchical organisations with powerful bureaucracies at their head.

Whilst the priorities of competition still determine



the overall objectives of these units, the previously sharp effects of competition within the units are now blunted by a mediating bureaucracy. Thus with many companies 'under one roof', so to speak, it may be that only one (usually the marketing company) actually operates directly at a profit. It is still clear in most private companies, how each section contributes to the final profit, but in the heavily bureaucratised state capitalist nations of eastern Europe, especially in Russia, the lines of cause and effect have become accentuated to such an extent, that the motivations of quite large economic groups seem far removed from those of competitive capitalism.

Clearly these countries have not abolished capitalism. The primary relationship of wage-labour and capital is retained, along with production for sale on the home

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consumer, and world markets, supplemented by a thriving black market. But at the same time a fairly major shift has taken place in the constitution of the ruling class and in the decision making machinery. The autonomy of the capitalist economy has been substantially restricted and other problems inherent in capitalism (such as the need to encourage worker participation, without conceding real social control) have become more acute.

The traditional economic problems of competitive capitalism are still powerful influences on the lives of the worlds workers. The basic economic process already referred to - the need to continually increase exploitation, to accumulate larger and larger volumes of capital at an accelerating rate on an ever expanding market, is inherently unstable. The dominant powers have of course learnt a great deal since the 30's slump and have much more economic control than ever before. But we still see them firstly exporting their own economic problems to weaker economies (by expelling immigrants for instance) and then jumping back in with economic aid when one or more of those economies looks likely to collapse and threaten the whole system.

There is a very real danger of a major economic collapse on a world scale, even if it isn't actually inevitable. The growth of bureaucracy and state control world wide may have enabled the ruling class to ameliorate the effects of the crisis, but they are a long way from the sort of positive (if inefficient) economic planning which only a totally bureaucratised world economy could guarantee.

It is clear then, that the twin dangers of bureaucratic slavery and capitalist competition can only be avoided through the complete abolition of commodity production, wage-labour and the state, and the institution of generalised self-management.

SOLIDARITY(MANCHESTER)

Where Now for the Labour Party?

INTRODUCTION

The following article contains a certain amount of informed speculation. We are publishing it as an introduction to the subject of the open meeting at the next Solidarity conference, to be held in Oxford around the end of January/beginning of February. The title of the meeting is 'The Labour Left, Modern Capitalism and the Libertarian Communist Alternative.' Eds.

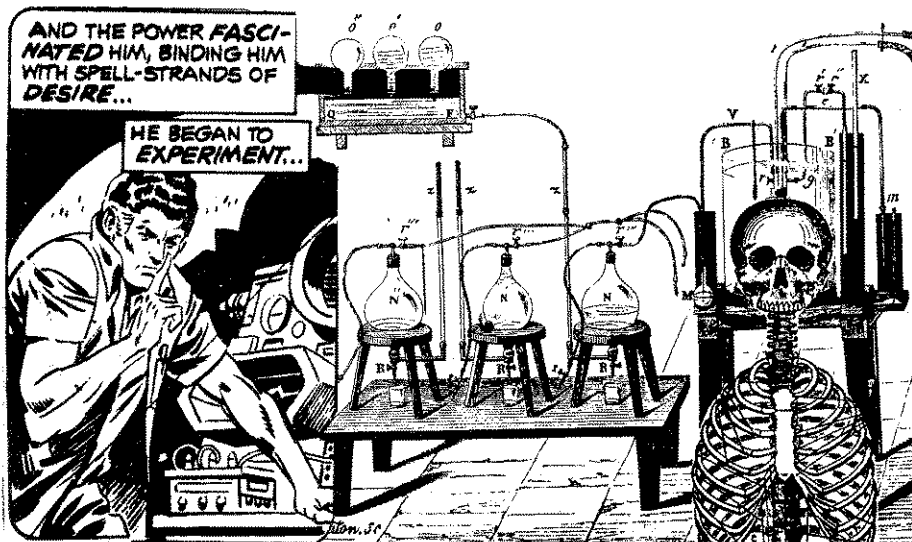
The IRA threats to politicians during the last General Election, helped the two main parties present their campaigns as a media spectacle, more than ever before. Television was the principal presenter of the message, which was, 'parliamentary democracy offers you a real choice'. Vetting of audiences in halls reduced heckling and dissent. The acolytes could acclaim and the cameras could present the politicians unhindered and unchallenged. Radio was also neutral in observing the rules of the two party system, while the newspapers, in the main supporting the Tories, gave the Labour Party full news coverage of their policies, and plenty of favourable comment. Why not, when both parties stand for different ways of doing the same thing. On a sliding scale we were shown the Liberals, glimpses of 'alternatives', (how the 'communists' and WRP would

manage us), and a peep at the lunatic fringe. An increase in the deposit next time will eliminate the poorer among them.

The state, through the post office, enshrined the parliamentary system by distributing all addresses to the electorate in a standard non-distinguishing 'election communication' envelope, (no need for the Party faithful to slog round doors). For those who bothered to open them, the contents matched the outside. By next election Party HQ's may have installed leaflet folding and envelope filling machines. Not only does it expose the irrelevance of this method of putting accross the 'message'; it brings into focus the fact that a powerful political party does not need a very viable constituency membership. ('Militant' and other entrust trotskyists please note!).

More fundamentally it suggests that a so-called 'right' or 'moderate' Labour Party might 'go it alone', when the conditions are favourable, despite the trot' and 'left' verbiage about the neccessity for grass roots constituency involvement.

What are the long term factors which might precipitate a move towards an overt 'Social Democratic' Labour Party, which leaves the trot's with a 'marxoid' Labour Party corpse?



The first possible allies could again be the financiers and large manufacturers fleeing from Thatchers 'radical' economics. Those people who know that capital accumulates more reliably when concentrated in fewer private hands, and when the state intervenes to help manage and control markets. (For example the concentrated capital required for opening up China and the 'communist' bloc has to be unhindered by the vagaries and uncertainties of Thatchers little entrepreneurs and the unreliability of Keith Josephs 'free' market forces.)

Then there is the Trade Union bureaucracy. For them the way to the corridors of power has always been through a Labour Party with a social democratic intent. Placate class confrontation for a slice of the cake and a seat at the table. With control of their members dues and the returns from their investments; (and perhaps on salaries of £40,000 a year which the Confederation of British Industry thinks they should get to keep their members in place), they would continue to make good Labour Party allies. They are unlikely to back a marxist non-runner, since it will lose them their beer and sandwiches at Downing Street.

Finally in Europe there are other powerful allies to be gained by a Labour Party not hamstrung by marxists and nationalisation enthusiasts. Most of the politicians managing the movement of capital are social democratic in inclination if not always in name. So a Labour Party inside a powerful European social democratic amalgam would have no need of the motley marxist bands. Combined with some form of proportional representation, likely to emerge when voting franchise is standardised throughout Europe, with candidates elected on a national or large regional slate as against a constituency one, this would facilitate moves away from constituency accountability and ease the election of a group of national MPs who control a centralised party machine, financed by the aforementioned individuals and perhaps the EEC, none of whom are remotely concerned with resolution-mongering

party members plotting in dark, dingy constituency rooms.

But the right and centre of the Party cannot suddenly desert its 'working constituency' when it has already lost its 'ideological constituency' - its rationale for existence - to Benn, the keeper of the 'ideals' and the 'conscience' of the Party.



In the short term the re-election of a Labour Government is the next step. It must remain to be seen as the sensible, responsible representative of 'labour', to be the buffer and safety-valve against class confrontation. It is in great danger of losing this credibility as last winters events showed. Benn, like Callaghan, knows this. ("He is a man with a lot of right ideas which the Labour Party needs to listen to.", said the moderate Callaghan to the right-wing Shirley Williams, on her TV chat show on the 5th or 6th November.) The Bennites are well aware that their bid for power can only be attempted within the auspices of the Labour Party. So they cannot risk a split. Without its respectable front they are impotent, and will compromise to ensure that they are not dumped with the trots.

Essentially 'Bennism' is a state capitalist programme for the regeneration of the British economy by increased input of government directed finance. (Capitalism for the Bennites is not in a condition of terminal illness.) But given the power of the EEC to direct capital this seems a non-starter. Britain is seen as the power base for this 'socialist' strategy hence the anti-EEC, pro-British nationalist stance of left-labourism, which should be expected to be ideologically 'internationalist'. The muscle for this

programme, in the face of all the economic difficulties and political hostility, is to be a Labour Party, strengthened firstly, by mass recruitment, and then elected on a mandate which offers some form of workers 'participation'.

Benn is offering 'leftists' inside and outside the Party, a break with years of negative, defensive 'oppositionism'. The bait looks like being attractive. His recruiting sergeants will be 'left' union officials, 'broad front' Communists, SWP opportunists, 'critical' trotskyists, marxist academics, confused libertarians, a gamut of 'left' labourists, christian socialists, concerned liberal-democrats and 'one issue' radicals.

These people will offer the Labour shilling at the next election. Meanwhile the action will start now with campaigns aimed at popularising the Labour Party; with uncritical 'Fight against Cuts' and 'Opposition to Redundancies' without a clear perspective on the 'usefulness' of work with the coming of the micro-chip. Workerism and statist politics will be the order of the day.

Full-blown nationalisation would be electoral suicide at present, as well as economically naive so a deal has to be made within the Labour Party, since it is the horse on which they want to ride to power. What Benn would like to offer is the integration of the lower levels of the 'labour movement' bureaucracy (Trade Union branches, shop stewards committees and combines which have ossified) into the management structure of industry and the economy, as the 'true' representatives of the working class. Trying to bring these 'grass roots' elements into the Labour Party 'decision making' processes and then attempting to cross fertilise them with the academic, professional quasi-marxist elite in the Party, which aspires to power, is what the argument in the Labour Party is about. Forget about democratic postures - who picks the leaders - who writes the manifesto - what goes into it. Under the guise of

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"power to the party rank-and-file", the left leadership is manoeuvring for power for itself. Neither the 'right' or the 'left' are interested in direct democracy or immediate accountability of elected representatives or workers management. The Bennites want to show that they have both the farsightedness and the 'bottle' to make the Labour Party the coherent managers of bureaucratic capitalism.

The scenario emerging is of a 'workers party' in power, managing its 'supporters' (the working class). The hope being that there will not be confrontation with the labour and union movement, since their 'interests' are genuinely represented in the Party. The exercising

of power by left labourism would be through their management of the labour force in a partnership with 'free' monopoly capital and state monopoly capital, with the decisive element, government direction of technological development. (See 'Industry, Technology and Democracy' IWC pamphlet by Tony Benn). Their dowry is intended to be a work force delivered into the hands of the state bureaucracy. Management courses for shop stewards, workers in boardrooms and on disciplinary committees, union officials policing the shop floor and office, the exploitation of technological and administrative expertise which emerges from shop stewards (Lucas Aerospace) and the setting up of worker-management consultative committees; would all be

part of the integration.

This is simply a continuation of social democratic policies of the past, with this difference. Previously the Labour Party introduced the union hierarchy as the representatives of labour to the corridors of power. Benn is saying that the lower ranks of union activists, are the 'real' representatives. What we are witnessing through Benn is not just the 'ideological' identification of the workforce with the ruling class, but an attempt at a 'structural' integration as well. Right and Left in the Labour Party need each other. A united party is necessary - not to fight the Tories - but to reduce class tension when the Conservatives are rocking the boat with their overt class hostility.

JF(Leeds).

Review

ECOLOGY AND ANARCHISM No 3. 15p+ post FROM BOX 1000, RISING FREE, 182 UPPER STREET, LONDON N1.

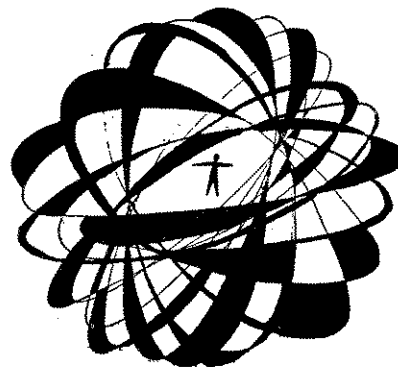
Ecology and Anarchism is well worth reading for its discussion on how we can effectively take action against nuclear power. The paper has three really good articles on the anti-nuclear movement. Two articles draw out the lessons from the May occupation at the Torness reactor site and critically analyze the Torness Alliance, the other examines the violence/non violence controversy. There's also two more general articles, one arguing that the 'ecological movement' is of central importance and the other outlining a 'strategy for social revolution'. I thought these last 2 were a bit simplistic - though their aim of putting our anti-nuke activities in a wider perspective is important.

Ecology and Anarchism argues that the state cannot be persuaded to stop developing nuclear power: the anti nuclear movement must go beyond 'symbolic' protest and take actions which directly prevent the construction of nuclear facilities. This was achieved briefly at Torness in May when hundreds of us occupied the machinery compound and damaged the earth moving equipment. One article describes how exhilarating it was to defy both the police and the Alliance leadership and directly attack nuclear

power. Personally, I derived more inspiration and learnt more from these few hours than from years of regularly attending symbolic demonstrations and protest marches

The article on violence and non-violence was first published in the USA and draws heavily on experiences in the fight against the construction of the Seabrook nuclear power plant. Since Ecology and Anarchism was published there has been an unsuccessful attempted occupation at Seabrook. The police attacked the 2-3000 occupiers with gas and clubs. The demonstrators, being committed to non-violence, didn't fight back but retreated and dispersed, despite sometimes having had an overwhelming numerical superiority.

Contrast this to the events at Whyl, West Germany in 1976, described in Ecology and Anarchism as follows: "28,000 people occupied the Whyl nuclear plant site and they physically drove off the police who came to arrest them. Instead of merely making a



symbolic statement and then accepting arrest, they utilized the strength of their numbers and collective principles to make an even stronger statement by not accepting the state's right to arrest them. They were ultimately successful as the building of the Whyl plant was consequently cancelled by the German Government."

As Ecology and Anarchism says, it's futile to analyze the anti-nukes movement unless we're also involved in practical activity. We want to help create continuing and escalating direct action against nuclear power. Not only at Torness, but in all areas, for example against nuclear power contractors like Sir Robert McAlpines. Some of us in Solidarity are involved in anti nuclear activity and we welcome contact with other activists. Write c/o the Solidarity Aberdeen address. Also available from Aberdeen, for the price of postage, the article 'Torness: keeping it clean' from Solidarity no 8, and a Solidarity leaflet produced for the anti-nukes march in Edinburgh in September.



ALL LIBERATED NOW ?

Is capitalism abolishing oppression on the grounds of sex and sexual orientation? Many would have us believe so. 'There's been the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts.' It's now quite accepted for women to have a career and thus a degree of economic independence. And as for gays, homosexuality for both males and females is now legal and gay clubs, bars and magazines abound'. So the arguments are often put. Even some revolutionaries hold views along these lines. For example a group in Leeds argue, in a discussion paper reprinted in Solidarity for Social Revolution no. 6 ('Anti-sexism: the affirmation of alienation') that 'the ending of oppressive sex roles in many areas of social life is a conscious and major aim of modern capitalism'.

This is by no means an academic argument. On the contrary it has important repercussions for revolutionaries' activity. If capitalism is of itself ending sex roles oppression then, to say the least, this need not be such an important priority for us.

But if capitalism is not of itself ending oppressive sex roles, this throws the onus onto us to end the oppression through our own conscious activity.

Here I want to argue that, on the whole, capitalism is not of itself ending oppressive sex roles.

Before examining what is happening today in various areas where sex roles oppression operates, I think we need to differentiate between two different trends within capitalism. On the one hand there are changes which are wanted by, and are in the interests of, the capitalist class and the state. On the other hand there are developments within capitalism which are taking place due to the activities of working people, or of a section of working people, acting in their own interests. While we would be suspicious of developments of the first kind, we would support developments of the second kind and would probably be involved in working for them.

EQUAL EXPLOITATION FOR WOMEN?

In recent years we have had the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act. These were passed through Parliament by the capitalist Labour Party, but during a period when there had been a considerable number of 'equal pay' strikes and a strengthen-

ing of ideas of 'women's rights'. I think there are two possible interpretations of this situation.

Some would argue that the capitalist class and state favour ending discrimination against women at work because it is in the long-term interests of the economy to do so. This would be through women being brought fully into the workforce on an equal basis with men, thereby increasing both the total workforce and the skilled proportion of the workforce (through women engineers, welders, etc.) which would be available for exploitation. It is also argued that higher wages and greater economic independence for women would enlarge the market for many goods and services.



A second interpretation is that the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts (SDA) are attempts by the state to recuperate, through partial concessions, a movement which, at the least, could significantly increase employers costs and, at best, could also increase the general self-confidence and combativity of the workforce. Evidence for this is that the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts are not at present achieving their stated aims. Women's average wages are still only about two-thirds those of men. This is through women being segregated into lower-paying industries and (where men and women work together) into the lower-paid jobs, often through grading schemes specially designed to get round the Equal Pay Act.

Similarly, while the SDA forces employers to change advertising practices (i.e. to advertise for a 'draughtsman/woman') this doesn't stop informal discrimination. It doesn't alter the fact that at school,

generally, it is the boys who are directed towards technical subjects while the girls are expected to do domestic science.

For there to be significant moves towards equality between men and women at work, there would have to be greatly improved pre-school child care facilities. At present such facilities are being cut back rather than extended.

In conditions of a booming economy the ruling class might well consider the cost of real Equal Pay and improved child care facilities worth the benefit they would gain from having more workers to exploit and from boosting market demand. However, in today's conditions of world-wide high unemployment and depression, there is not much incentive for the ruling class to end discrimination against women in employment.

Discrimination against women in employment is only one area of oppression caused by the sex roles attributed to people under capitalism. The ending of this discrimination, while all other areas of oppression based on sex roles remained untouched, would not at all imply that capitalism had in general ended oppression on the grounds of sex or sexual orientation.

KIDS 'n DISHES 'n RELATIONSHIPS

As already mentioned the state in Britain, far from expanding pre-school child care provision (and thus easing the burden of the mother) is on the contrary cutting back on the provision of nurseries, day-care centres, etc. As far as the responsibility for child care and domestic work within the family goes, it is still overwhelmingly regarded as the woman's responsibility. This is apparently as true in state capitalist countries such as the USSR as in the West. In the area of personal relationships it is still 'accepted' that in conventional male-female relationships the man is the dominant partner, the person who takes the initiative and is the chief decision-maker. This ranges from who asks who to dance at the disco to who is 'head of the household'. The oppressive nature of men-women relationships is still widely manifested in extreme forms such as women being attacked by their partners, through street hassles, sexual assaults and rape.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

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There is no attempt by the capitalist media or educational system to try and remove these forms of oppression. The set-up where child care and domestic work are 'a woman's job' is very useful to capitalist industry. Its current and future workers are fed and generally cared for by women's unpaid work. Capital is thus spared the cost of having to provide expensive child care facilities, communal laundries and canteens, etc. The oppressive nature of men-women relationships also aids capitalism. Divisions amongst the oppressed can only benefit our rulers.

It is true that men probably do take more responsibility for child care and domestic work now than they did, say, fifteen years ago. There is, on the whole, perhaps less inequality in men-women relationships. This is largely due to the change in climate caused by the growth of the Women's Movement, and is something we should encourage.

An important aspect of sex roles oppression is unsatisfying sexual relationships. In this area both men and women are oppressed. Again, this is obviously something which can only be changed by women and men themselves; there is no way capitalism of itself can end this oppression.

O.K. TO BE GAY?

I see no signs of any dynamic in capitalism working towards ending the oppression of gay people. There is, it is true, what appears to be a fairly flourishing section of the entertainment industry aimed at gays: gay bars, clubs, magazines, pornography etc. This does not necessarily lead to any general acceptance of homosexuality as equally valid to heterosexuality. Often it merely creates a gay ghetto. Moreover the values and attitudes prevalent in these commercial gay enterprises are frequently oppressive and sexist. In both Britain and the USA the last two or three years have seen the oppression of gays worsen in several ways. In Britain there has been the prosecution of Gay News, cases of people being sacked for wearing gay badges at work, and a considerable number of physical attacks on gay people, especially in London. In the USA 'Equal Rights' legislation outlawing discrimination against homosexuals has been repealed in several states, in the context of the active anti-gay campaigning of right-wing groups led by such as Anita Bryant.



Among some sections of young people especially the situation is more encouraging. In the fields of both 'left' politics and the rock music/politics sub-culture there is probably a growing realisation of the importance of gay liberation. More gay people are prepared to stand up against their oppression. This again is a change of attitudes and consciousness in a positive direction. It should be encouraged; it can't be dismissed as just a sinister capitalist plot to co-opt the revolution by getting everyone to spend their money on Tom Robinson Band records.

While it is conceivable that within capitalism there could be considerably greater acceptance of gayness than there is now, I believe that capitalism benefits from anti-gay attitudes and therefore that those in power are unlikely to encourage people to regard homosexuality as being as valid as heterosexuality. Capitalism is bolstered by the belief that the nuclear family is basic to our lives, that the man's role is to go out and be hard and competitive in a tough world and try to climb the ladder to success. While the woman may have a job, she must dedicate herself to bringing up the children and 'homemaking'. The nuclear family also enhances the consumption of the goods which capitalism produces. To every family its washing machine, TV, cooker, spin dryer, etc., etc.

Gay relationships potentially threaten the 'natural' sex roles of men and women and the nuclear family set-up (it is only a potential threat because many gay relationships mimic traditional heterosexual relationships in their role-playing, etc.). This makes it easier for capitalism to label homosexuality as something 'wrong' or as an 'unfortunate illness'.

BE A MAN, IF YOU CAN

Sex roles oppress men through conditioning them to repress their emotions and be aggressive and competitive. This oppression is very much linked to the maintenance of class oppression. If men accept the idea of being tough aggressive competitors in a tough aggressive competitive world, they are not very likely to unite with other men and women to fight against the hierarchical system and its rulers. Thus (and this should cause no surprise), far from developing the means of ending this form of oppression, capitalism continues to promote it. It does so, for instance, through exams, assessments and competitive sports at school, and through the promotion rat race at work.

A challenge to these values has developed in the last few years. This has not come from any agency of capitalism but through men getting together to discuss and try to overcome this oppressive conditioning in groups such as 'Men against Sexism'. Once again, I think this is a positive development which we should support and, where appropriate, get involved in.

WHAT WE GONNA DO ABOUT IT?

Having looked at the different areas of oppression caused by capitalism's sex roles, I would argue that in only one of these (discrimination against women in employment) is there any possibility that capitalism itself is attempting to end the oppression. And even in this case it is highly debatable whether this is in fact happening. In all the other areas - women being burdened with an unfair share of child care and domestic work and oppressed in personal relationships, the oppression of gays, and the oppressive conditioning of men - no significant attempt is being made by any agency of capitalism to end the oppression. In some of these areas there is opposition to the oppression - from the efforts of sections of working people acting in their own interests. These are positive developments which we should welcome and be involved in. We should encourage those involved to oppose all oppressive relationships. As revolutionaries, we need to make the fight against oppressive sex roles one of our major activities. The oppression which people suffer due to their sex, or due to their sexual orientation, is as important as that suffered through their not having

control over society's productive resources. The two oppressions are interlinked.

How we could and should fight oppressive sex roles could be the subject for another article. Independent organising by women, gays and men, and united activity by women and men, and homosexuals and heterosexuals are both important and valuable. Revolutionaries should not hesitate to criticise harmful trends - such as reformism and separatism - in the Women's, Gay and Men's movements. But we must also recognise the need and right of people to get together independently to discuss and act against their particular oppressions. And, perhaps most important, fighting oppressive sex roles should not be just another 'issue' for us to campaign on. We should try to make it integral to how we organise politically, and to how we live our everyday lives and relationships.

Mike V. (Aberdeen)

SOLIDARITY CONTACT LIST.

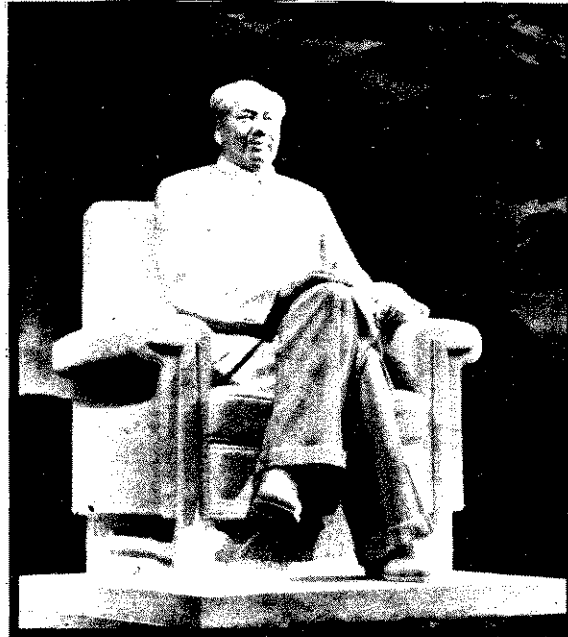
Write to Solidarity c/o,
167 King Street Aberdeen,
Scotland.
LCP, 30 Blenheim Terrace,
Leeds, LS2 9HD.
124 Hollis Road, Coventry.
34 Cowley Road, Oxford.
123 Lathom Road, London,
E6.
Grd Flr Flat, 8 Hector Rd,
Longsight, Manchester 13.
(temporary address)

APOLOGY: We apologise for numerous typing errors in this issue. None of us are good typists and we have corrected as many errors as our patience will allow. Solidarity(Manchester).



Cartoon by Walter Crane, political contemporary of William Morris

The Myth of Mao's Self-Management



Mao Tse-tung. Marble. Mao's tomb, Peking.

Anarchists and libertarians have often spoken of libertarian socialism as more or less synonymous with a system of "generalised self-management". (Bertolo, Solidarity etc.). [By 'generalised self-management' we mean the extension of self-managed struggles against capitalism to all areas of social life, eventually involving a revolutionary rupture with the whole of the existing social order on a world scale. The self-managed society we seek can only be achieved by the removal of capitalist economic restraints such as wage labour, commodity production and the market. It is important to stress this since some concepts of self-management in libertarian circles amounts to little more than 'self-managed exploitation'.] E&.

To them the self-management model is one where there has been "a universal socialisation of science conducive to the abolition of hierarchical division of labour." (Berti.), "the overthrow of the social and technical division of labour and the socially equalitarian distribution of work itself under the maximum possible automation of the productive processes." (Guiducci), "collective management by all the personnel of an enterprise, of the activities of the enterprise itself, forward planning, execution, control etc. preceded by the structural transformation of society" (Meister), "the re-establish-

ment of an authentic relationship between the real needs of society and enterprises which would exclude the manipulation of needs by the latter and this mutual authentic relationship would be best generated and attained in the small enterprise" (Prandstraller), "in addition to a libertarian system of industrial management, the development of a new 'self' in a moral cultural and personal sense that stands in harsh contradiction with the hierarchical nature of the factory and the broadening of the locus for self-management to include not just industry but communities and municipalities; in addition to a new, non-hierarchical technology that will replace the factory as a social and economic model and 'already exists as a 'people's technology' in the form of small, human-scaled, easily comprehensible community technologies based on decentralised gardening, solar, and wind-power techniques" (Bookchin.)

MYTHS.

It has often been claimed that Mao Tse-tung tried to build Chinese society into one which has many features similar to those essential elements of the self-management model cited above

On the question of division of labour, it is said that Mao tried to eliminate the three major differences; the differences

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

between town and country, between workers and peasants, and the separation between manual and mental labour. In 1958, Mao Tse-tung organised the People's Commune movement and the principle of the people's commune was that agriculture was to be carried on in the cities and industries were to be developed in the countryside. Later when Mao had begun the Cultural Revolution, he made the May 7th Directive in 1966. In the Directive, he called upon all professional and occupational units be turned into big revolutionary schools involving both agriculture and industry, cultural and military activities.

In order to eliminate the separation between manual and mental labour and to train party cadres who would not be separated from the masses, Mao set up the May 7th Cadre Schools to which he sent party cadres, intellectuals, writers, artists and other "mental workers" working in different departments including educational, cultural, hygiene and scientific research units. At the May 7th Cadre Schools, labour education would be carried out and manual work, like participating in agricultural production would be performed. Mao also required that writers, artists and scientific workers constantly go to the countryside or the factories for living experience.

Mao also carried out a revolution in education. This revolution in education is concerned with the number of years in school, policies teaching methods, teaching material, the enrolment system and the remoulding of teachers. First there was a cut of four to five years in schooling from primary school through to university. Book learning became closely integrated with practical production. School education was no longer confined to the classroom. Primary and middle schools in town and country established close links with nearby factories, people's communes and army units. They also opened small workshops and farms and invited workers, peasants and army men to serve as part-time teachers. The universities also instituted a new system of combining teaching with scientific research and productive labour; besides building up regular links with factories and people's communes, they ran their own factories and farms. Teachers and students would go together to a factory, farm or people's commune to take part in collective labour for a given period in accordance with the teaching plan. Also a large number of workers, peasants and soldiers became lecturers.

To further eliminate differentials in Chinese society, Mao Tse-tung and his followers pursued policies to restrict "bourgeois rights". Mao tried to promote an attitude of work "to each according to his capabilities" without consideration of reward. He sought free medicine and labour insurance for all. He argued for the elimination of/closing the gap of wage differentials.



Mao Tse-tung and Hua Kuo-feng, Peking conference.

In the area of industrial management, Mao criticised Liu Shao-chi's counter-revolutionary revisionist line which used the redtape of one man management. He urged the adherence to the Charter of the Anshan Iron and Steel Company. The Charter laid down the "two participations, one reform and three way alliance to be one of the principles for industrial organisation and management." The two participations refer to cadres participating in labour and workers participating in management. The one reform refers to the reformation of all unreasonable rules and regulations and the three way alliance refers to the alliance of the working masses, leading cadres and the technical personnel. Mao believed that cadre participation in labour would eliminate bureaucracy; work participation in management was based on the fact that the working masses should be the masters of socialist production. Mao wanted unreasonable rules favourable to the protection of bourgeois rights to be changed to become rules advantageous to the masses. And for the three way alliance, in which the working masses, leading cadres and the technical

personnel together study and resolve all important technical questions concerning production, it would be favourable to the development of a 'people's technology, and the narrowing down of the differences between mental labour and manual labour. Following Mao's line, Shanghai Watch factory reported that since the Cultural Revolution, the workers of the factory had well developed the idea of managing their own affairs and practised democracy in management, planning and technology.

Similar to industrial management, in the rural communes, the masses of poor and middle peasants were supposed to be given great say in the running of the communes. Also at the different levels of government, from the municipal to the county and from the county to the provincial level, the administrative organ was the revolutionary committees (since the cultural revolution) which were made up of party cadres, soldiers and representatives of the revolutionary masses. Through these revolutionary committees the masses were to be given the necessary opportunity and power to intervene in the management of their municipalities, counties, etc.

In the development of science and technology, Mao laid down policies requiring the scientific workers no longer to do research behind closed doors. They were supposed to go out of their offices to integrate with the worker-peasant-soldier masses to develop science and technology. The big scientific experiment force was to be found in both urban and rural areas composed mainly of workers, peasants and soldiers. People's communes and production brigades would have their scientific experiment stations and groups actively managing seed-breeding fields, experimental and high-yield plots etc. The workers, peasants and soldiers were to become scientists themselves and were making numerous inventions and innovations. It was reported that the worker-peasant-soldier scientists were writing for the scientific journals which once received the contributions of only specialists.

Other than a firm commitment on mass innovation, an inherent aspect of Mao's technology policy is a commitment to self-reliance and small and medium scale enterprises. Instead of relying on imported technology, Mao advocated a self reliance policy in the use of technology-the development of indigenous techniques specifically suited to

domestic conditions. In medicine and pharmacology for example, medical workers have explored the legacies of traditional Chinese medicine and pharmacology, achieving such notable results as acupuncture and Chinese herb medicine anaesthesia. More importantly, the rejection of imported technology which usually is capital intensive, and the use of indigenous techniques under the circumstances necessarily led to the building of many small and medium sized enterprises involving great masses of people. It was reported that except in some remote areas, most counties have set up their own farm machinery plants and repair works. Eighty percent of China's counties have established their own cement works, which totalled 2800 in 1975. Small hydro-electric power stations provided electricity for many remote regions for the first time. Many small iron and steel works have sprung up. The small enterprises have been set up by provinces, municipalities, administrative regions and counties, and sometimes by the people's communes and neighbourhood communities. In Hunan Province for example, the people's communes and production brigades have opened many small coal pits, turning out more than 3 million tons of coal a year which is more than necessary for the satisfaction of the peasants' needs.(2). These small enterprises, making use of the simpler production techniques appropriate to Chinese/local conditions, are not only more ecologically sound but also in a better position to meet local needs. It was pointed out that the widespread building of small enterprises had helped to improve the geographical distribution of industry in China. While many of China's industries are still found in the big coastal cities, there have not arisen any industrial belts as dreadful as those found in Japan or the West.

In building a Chinese society in accordance with his conception Mao realised that there must be new men and women with a different outlook and a different consciousness corresponding to the new society. So through the various movements that he organised, from the People's Commune Movement (1958) to the Socialist Education Movement (1963), from the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1965 to 1969) to the campaign to Restrict Bourgeois Rights (1975), Mao tried to

revolutionize the thoughts of the Chinese people. Mao said and firmly believed, "Before a brand new social system can be built on the site of the old, the site must be swept clean. Invariably, remnants of old ideas reflecting the old system remain in people's minds for a long time and they do not easily give way". Mao in fact wanted a fundamental change in the inner soul of mankind so that old thoughts, old culture, old traditions and old habits would be replaced by new ones. To him, all aspects of the superstructure not corresponding to what he considered to be a socialist economic base must be reformed. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was particularly important as a movement to transform mankind and to reform human behaviour.

REALITY.

Mao's project, sketched above, has been considered exceedingly libertarian by many. Too many an opponent of the capitalist system, China under Mao was a genuinely socialist society. Now when the present rulers of China have reversed much of the Maoist policies - they condemn the present rulers and policies as revisionist and retrogressive. What needs to be pointed out, however, is that the people of China had indicated that they unequivocally rejected Mao's way. In April 1976, at Tienanmen, the people likened Mao to the ruthless Chinese dictator, Shih Huang-ti and on that occasion they called out aloud, "Gone are the days of Shih Huang-ti!" And how the people rejoiced when the most loyal followers of Mao, the Gang of Four, were captured and eliminated! What was wrong with Mao's project? Don't the Chinese people want a libertarian society?

workers were but slaves of the state and party. The masses were never managing their own lives. Rather it was the state, the party that managed. When agriculture was carried out in the cities and industries were run in the countryside, it meant in addition to the work in the fields or factories, the peasants and the workers had to do extra work in the little mines and the little plots of land. When the young educated were dispersed to the countryside against their will and the will of the peasants not only was Mao creating resentment against his own self, he was also bringing clashes and bitterness between the peasants and the young educated. The May 7th Cadre Schools were but forced labour camps and prisons and had not reformed the party cadres who continued to be extremely bureaucratic and corrupt. The few writers who had not been purged and allowed to write no doubt went frequently to the countryside or the factories but they only produced unexciting materials praising the ever greatness of Mao, his thoughts and the Motherland. The revolution in education meant long hours of Mao Tse-tung thoughts in schools and hours of work in either the countryside and/or the factories. Little else was learnt. To gain admission to universities, many were orientated simply to demonstrate their political loyalty to Mao and the Party by being obedient and able to recite Mao's thoughts by heart, and more importantly, to court the favours of those in powerful positions. The worker-peasant-soldier lecturers or teachers in universities were not really people having developed expert knowledge through daily life and practical experience but people picked for their loyalty to Mao. The universities and schools were not actually run by the workers or



Pro-Hua demonstration in Shanghai

photo: Liberation

The rejection by the masses of Mao, his policies and his regime was due to the fact that realities under Maoist China meant that the masses of peasants and

worker-peasants but actually "workers" and "worker-peasants" picked by the party under the direction of the party. The

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

restriction of bourgeois rights meant that the people were expected and required to work hard without consideration of reward. Under Mao for years and years wages remained the same.

For years and years under Mao, those who ran factories simply ignored demands for any improvement in working conditions. In the management and organisation of factories in the "three way alliance", the party cadres were always the bosses controlling all powers - their words must always be listened to. It is true that at times the workers were involved in the management of the work process - in developing ways and means to meet targets within a shorter duration or to surpass targets. The workers were encouraged to make innovations and improvements in technical areas in so far as these would speed up the production process. On the other hand, many trained scientists under the Maoist regime were either not given the opportunity or were afraid to continue scientific studies and research (for fear of being condemned as "expert and white") leading to a tremendous wastage in human resources which could have been used for the development of

technology that serves the people and is liberatory. If on the factory floor the workers were the slaves of the Party cadres running the factories, in the countryside, the party secretaries of the communes were the new landlords - they could force peasants to work days or nights, or days and nights. And the party cadres in ruling positions in the countryside never shied away from using their power to secure privileges and tread on the peasants. Both the party bosses in the factories and communes tended to make their own arbitrary rules and so often too they arbitrarily persecuted individuals who would not cooperate. More often, they just received directions from above. Needless to say, the revolutionary committees were controlled by the party. Like a giant octopus, the party controlled everything, the state machine, factories, communes etc.etc. Like a pyramid the Party was also a hierarchical organisation - the lower levels were subordinate to the higher levels. The county committees were subordinate to the provincial committees and so on. The self reliance policy and the promotion of small scale enterprise of Mao was more a result of necessity and nationalistic sentiment (the Russians were withdrawing their aid in 1960

and Mao had already anticipated it when he called for a self-reliance policy in the use of technology in 1958; the lack of capital etc.) than an awareness of the more ecologically sound nature of intermediate technology and small scale enterprises. In the spring of 1957, Mao said, "We must build up a large number of large scale modern enterprises step by step to form the mainstay of our industry, without which we shall not be able to turn our country into a strong modern industrial power within the coming decades". Granted that the self-reliance policy and the emphasis on small and medium sized enterprises have created less deterioration in the environment than many developed countries, the practical implementation of the self-reliance policy had meant a refusal to learn from any new foreign technological knowhow which may be used to further a process of liberation. Also, self-reliantly, China had developed an atomic and nuclear technology, among other things which can hardly be called a technology of a liberatory kind. Finally in his effort to create a new man, Mao turned his thoughts into dogmas of a religion. His followers were urged to be like "screws" to be always faithful to him and the party,



to be selfless.....to be willing slaves of the state!

If one believes in all the Maoist propaganda, then it is not difficult to say that Mao had built a "self-managed" society bearing most if not all of the features attributed to a self managed system listed in the first part of this article. Nevertheless we have presented the realities of Maoist China and we hope that we have demonstrated sufficiently that Maoist propaganda was not to be believed. Our remaining task is to explain why Mao in theory can sound so libertarian at times and in practice, he has created such monstrosities, and such a totalitarian regime. The most important point is that Mao was never a libertarian although his rhetorics made him sound like one at times. Mao was fundamentally a Leninist-Stalinist and he was firmly committed to the Leninist idea of the necessity of the leadership of a vanguard party. The Chinese Communist party must always lead. Or this more often means that he and his faction in the party must always lead. When Mao spoke about the masses managing the factories or the communes or any other social institutions, he was speaking in terms of such activities being carried out under the leadership

and control of the party cadres. Mao spoke often about the creativity of the masses. He constantly called for the mobilisation of the masses and organising mass movements. Indeed Mao was aware of the power of the masses -- ever since his conquest of state power with the aid of the peasant masses. This lesson he held dear to his heart since 1949 and explains why he organised the Great Leap Forward, the People popularly known as the technobureaucracy, Mao did not manage to destroy. After his death and the downfall of the Gang of Four, China is developing into a technobureaucratic system in which there is a fusion of the party bureaucrats and the intellectuals in managerial and administrative positions into a class of technobureaucrats.(3)

In his endeavours, Mao and his propagandists were able to present his policies and practices in libertarian languages and more than a few had been fooled. The fact remains that Mao's goals were not libertarian goals; his ways were not libertarian ways. Mao's system is not a libertarian system. It is one where there is a division between the leaders (Mao, his followers and the Party) and the led (the masses), a system which still has order givers and order takers. It is a system that inevitably arises as a result of following the Leninist ideology of the vanguard party.

Lee Yu See & F. Chan.

Notes.

1. Red Flag pp74-77 1975 no1 Peking.
2. New China's First Quarter Century, pp24-27, Foreign Language Press, 1975, Peking.
3. See essay "The Four Modernisations and the Rise of the Technobureaucracy" - available from Solidarity.

THESES ON THE CHINESE REVOLUTION

by Cajo Brendel. How state capitalism (in Bolshevik garb) came to China. The end of the 'Cultural Revolution' and the emergence of the new class. 40p.

Note:

Members of Manchester Solidarity distributed leaflets to passers-by on the official opening day of the China Bank in Manchester, which briefly outlined China's relationship with Britain and explained the opposition movement there.

First Worldism or Libertarianism?

The article on Nicaragua in the issue No 9 of the magazine prompted some questions in my mind about that old source of problems, the third world. The writer seemed to me to have grossly oversimplified what has happened there, and by concluding that basically it's all a fight over access to the Nicaraguan market, to have ignored much more important political issues.

I'll take that point up later. What first struck me was that the article provides a good example of the standard Solidarity attitude towards the third World, and therefore a useful starting point for questioning the limitations of that attitude. Knowing that the reflex reaction among some Solidarity members to such an intention consists of a defensive, "Is this 3rd worldism raising its ugly head?" may I point out that what follows is not another variation on this perennial theme, as I trust readers will agree.

This kind of paranoia by the way is not mere coincidence. The Soly position is contained in "Third - Worldism or Socialism?" and itself is a response to the euphoric support offered since the 60's by much of the left to national liberation movements. "Third-Worldism or Socialism?" argues against the idea that imperialist exploitation of the 3rd World will meet its match at the hands of the various national liberation movements which will institute, or at least pave the way for, socialism in these backward countries.

The implication of the Soly position is basically that the possibility of a socialist revolution is only to be envisaged under the conditions pertaining in advanced capitalist countries (including 'communist' ones). This would seem to be due to factors such as the relative development of absorption into the consumer market of workers in these countries bringing to the fore questions like, "What is the point of consuming? Or, for that matter, working?" Third World dockers, on the other hand, are understood to be too busy

fighting bread-and-butter issues to be able to appreciate such questions.

Overall, such argument seems fair enough. But it is a little too black and white, it seems to invite the blase and dismissive attitude displayed in the piece on Nicaragua. Probably the fault lies in using such an unsatisfactory concept as "3rd World", thus lumping together countries which often have more differences than similarities. While we can accept the improbability of libertarian revolution breaking out in Gabon or Surinam, we should at least appreciate that the development of capitalism in other countries, such as Brazil and Argentina, has created situations that we should keep an eye on. In such countries, the proletariat has a significant social and political presence, if not always a very independent one. The Argentinian working-class, for example, has certainly influenced its country's evolution, and not only through Peronism. The courageous refusal of Argentine workers in the last 3 years to be terrified into line by the barbaric military regime is an example of class solidarity that ought to be better known over here.

The massive revival of the labour movement in Brazil since last year provides a striking rebuttal of the attempts of that country's military regime to depoliticise the working class through violent repression and subtle propaganda. This is not to say that explicitly libertarian ideas and practices were in evidence, but certainly the soil from which they may emerge is being formed.

Other 3rd World countries provide examples of explicit or implicit libertarian action, for example the self-managed industrial and community organisations which arose in Chile prior to the 1973 coup. "Third Worldism or Socialism?" itself quotes approvingly the Saigon Workers' Commune of 1945. And after all, Russia was not exactly an advanced capitalist country in 1917. These occurrences are

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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usually isolated, short-lived and pretty hopeless. But that doesn't remove our interest in the reasons for their happening, and for their ending and in their content

With these considerations in mind, let us look again at Nicaragua. What happened there cannot be subsumed under the question of access to the country's market. The fact that a popular insurrection was involved should not be dismissed because it was militarily led by the Sadinistas and identified itself with them. It would be interesting to know how such popular involvement came about, how it organised itself, what ideas it threw up, and so on.

Moreover, the behaviour of key foreign powers is also worthy of study. The US took the unusual step of abandoning one of its puppets whom it would previously have defended by military intervention (as indeed the article in the last issue points out). In fact it was thinking of intervening, but its proposal to do so was overwhelmingly defeated at the Organisation of American states, a body which the US once controlled. Now it no longer does so, but still felt, at least in this case, that any action should be approved by that body.

In fact, the whole of US strategy in Latin America and the Caribbean is apparently changing. A decade ago the watchword was counter-insurgency, the preparation of military readiness to snuff out opposition. It is not to be wondered at that during the 70s the vast majority of Latin American countries were or became dominated by military regimes (though to suggest, as cruder leftists and some Latin American nationalists do, that this situation was entirely engineered by the US, is a ridiculous distortion of reality.)

Now important changes can be seen taking place in this continent. The Brazilian military are well along the path to a return to the barracks, the Bolivian military having gone back tried to return to power and were massively rejected by trade unions and left wing forces. In Peru the military are under pressure from civilian sectors, while in Argentina, it seems unlikely that the military have much basis for staying in power more than a few years now that the threat of 'subversion' has been dealt with. The same may be true in Chile. In Central America, the US has been putting pressure on 'liberated' Nicaragua's dictatorial neighbours, Honduras and Guatemala, to reduce the repression before they provoke a repeat performance, and in El Salvador US strategy is being carried out through a centrist military coup.

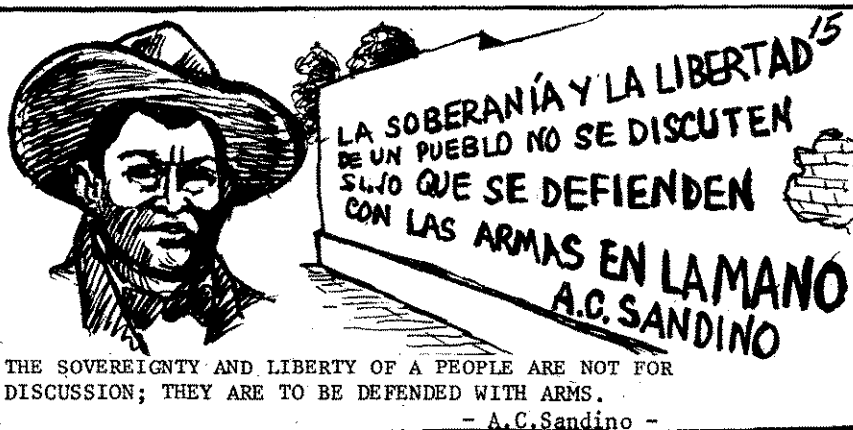
Switching to the left-hand corner Cuba, though not hiding its enthusiasm for the Sadinistas, has remained well to the background. The most it appears to have provided for the insurrection was technical training and military advisors. Whereas ten years ago, Che Guevara would have welcomed US military intervention in Nicaragua as part of the "One, two..... many Vietnams" policy, this time Fidel Castro declared himself "infinitely pleased" that this had not happened, adding, with fraternal concern, that it would have been "a suicidal act for US policy in this hemisphere".

Moreover, the guerrilla left in Latin America, which flourished in the wake of the Cuban revolution, has for sometime been beating a tactical retreat after crushing defeats in Brazil, Bolivia, Uruguay, Chile and Argentina. Most of the left now gives priority to political work among the workers, to pushing for the restoration of liberal democracy, and so on.

So, while the US and Cuba seem to have come to some sort of 'rapprochement' and mutual desire to avoid confrontation, both left and right in Latin America seem to be working towards the same goals, the establishment of liberal civilian governments. And such moves have the blessing of the representatives of foreign capital, who have been the great beneficiaries of the various militaries' rule. They seem to feel that the stage has now been reached when with a little planning effort it may be more peaceful and profitable to sell workers food and other items of consumption rather than knock them on the head when they complain of being hungry. Certainly in Brazil, and perhaps in other countries, the more far-sighted capitalists are already glimpsing the possibilities to be offered by developing the domestic market. (there are 120 million Brazilians, the majority of whom are at present either outside or marginal to the market - and in the year 2000, there will be a projected 200 million).

Just to return briefly to Nicaragua, we know that the new regime will be implementing some kind of capitalism, but at present we don't know which. The choice is between the state capitalism of the marxist Sadinistas, or the private capitalism of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie. Conflict between these two sides has, however, been carefully avoided so far. The Sadinistas, who militarily control the country, have made great efforts to accommodate private capitalists interests both inside and outside Nicaragua. Of the 5 strong ruling junta, one is a millionaire industrialist, one belongs to the populist group, Los Doce, and only one is a Sadinista. Among the rest of the government, the minister of economic planning is a right of centre economist and lawyer; the finance minister is a banker and Christian Democrat; the industry minister is the conservative president of the chamber of commerce; and the agriculture minister is a conservative Christian Democrat and wealthy livestock rancher.

In other words, a delicate balancing act is underway, which instead of ending in struggle between the two sides, could lead to a successful marriage of interests. And such an unprecedented development would take place under the approving eyes of Washington and Havana. Nicaragua seems to symbolise what is happen-



ing in Latin America as a whole, as the interests of left and right to a certain extent converge. If this occurs on any scale, it will give a big impetus to the libertarian perspective as a means of struggling against both sources of oppression. And especially in countries where capitalism is, as we mentioned above, preparing the ground for libertarian politics anyway.

It would be unfortunate if we let "Third Worldism or Socialism?" lead us into thinking that there is little to interest us in the third World. It is not intended to be a statement of "First Worldism", even if it seems to pull us that way, and the title of this article should not be taken entirely seriously. But certainly we could do with a more positive attitude to the libertarian potentialities which are developing in the 3rd World.

N. T.



Return of: "In Search of the Ruling Class"

(Note: this article has been substantially edited.)

"If we are saying that we have a bureaucratic society and not a bureaucratic capitalist society then we have to locate power in a different way"

JQ(Leeds) Solidarity No9.

My question is, how can we ever say that we have a bureaucratic society full stop, especially here in the advanced western capitalist countries?

"Contemporary society is the society of Bureaucratic Capitalism. In Russia and China and in other so called 'socialist' countries, the most extreme and the clearest form of Bureaucratic Capitalism is being realized." Castoriadis, 1976
'The Hungarian Source'

But even this clear statement by Cardan can be misleading, if bureaucratic capitalism is not understood in terms of the internal dynamic of 'laissez faire' on the one hand, and the substitute ruling class - the representation of the proletariat on the other. It was Marx himself who was able to describe in a limited way the dynamic by which capital and state were fusing together, although he was not able to see that this was to become the most permanent and basic feature

of advanced capitalism in the West, what Cardan calls "partially Bureaucratic Capitalism"

"But the modern state which through mercantilism, began to support the development of the bourgeoisie, and which finally became its state at the time of laissez faire, was to reveal later that it was endowed with a central power in the calculated management of the economic process.... Marx in Bonapartism, was able to describe the outline of the

modern statist bureaucracy, the fusion of capital and state, the formation of a national power of capital over labour, a public force organised for social enslavement, in which the bourgeoisie renounces all historical life which is not its reduction to the economic history of things.."
Debord.

The development of bureaucratic capitalism in the East was separate from that in the Western advanced capitalist countries, the reasons for this separation being the socio-economic under-development and the representation of the proletariat in the course of the class struggle. There and only there, in the so-called

'socialist' countries may we talk about the bureaucracy full stop.

"The industrialisation of the Stalin epoch reveals the reality behind the bureaucracy: it is the continuation of the power of the economy, the salvaging of the essential of the commodity society, namely preserving commodity labour. It is the proof of the independent economy, which dominates society to the point of re-creating for its own ends the class domination which is necessary to it.... The totalitarian bureaucracy is not 'the last owning class in history' in the sense of Bruno Rizzi; it is only a substitute ruling class for the commodity economy. In effect capitalist private property is replaced by a simplified subproduct, one which is less diversified, and is concentrated into the collective property of the bureaucratic class. This under-developed form of ruling class is also the expression of economic under-development... It was the workers party organised according to the bourgeois model of separation which provided the hierarchical-statist cadre for this supplementary edition of a ruling class." Debord.

But such considerations are only positive insofar as revolutionaries are working towards a strategy of insurrection in a specific geographical zone, otherwise the attempt to pinpoint the ruling class is a waste of time, an academic exercise. Of course it would be very positive to know who pulls the strings in a pyramid of social enslavement so that you can immobilise the whole fucking thing in time of insurrection. But the point is to be clear as to who the enemy is.

The task of an international revolutionary movement cannot be anything else than the total and intransigent abolition of the historical conditions that determine our every day lives, namely the total abolition of commodity-spectacular production, wage labour, the state, alienation itself.

Those historical conditions must not be separated from the positive project, and the positive project cannot be fragmented into a series of 'campaigns' without any internal coherence, without any perspective of generalisation. The best way to get the most out of the system and also to supersede it, is one single 'campaign' for the abolition of those conditions and the establishment of the generalised self-management of the workers councils.

Needless to say that our organisation in the here and now must reflect the way that the councils will be organised and our rage to live without constraints, and it must also have the qualities which are necessary and desirable for the intervention in the class struggle.

Primarily the enemy is the order of things, specific social relations and of course people, men and women who benefit, man, maintain, reproduce, totally identify with those historical conditions. But the distinction between things and people must be made. Our revolutionary practice must be intransigent against conditions and the social roles that actively reproduce them, and people will be destroyed only to the extent that they actively support their roles against the Social Revolution.

Dimitri (Manchester).

ABORTION WOMEN AND THE LEFT: Oct 28th and after

THE UNIONS (Oh Brother.)

The demo in London on 28th October against the Corrie Bill to 'amend' the 1967 Abortion Act was impressive in its size and in the widespread support it received from all over the country and from all sorts of groups and individuals. The TUC, as organisers, might be expected to be pleased at this; they might even, if we didn't know them better, be expected to welcome the participation of large numbers of women despite the abysmal record of the unions on the question of women's rights. But the welcome was at best qualified: a mass movement is alright as long as it is under control, and women are all right if they know their place. Hence the interminable 'marshalling' in Hyde Park to get everyone neatly pigeon-holed in their designated sections by pre-allocated numbers - male-dominated unions naturally at the head, the National Abortion Campaign itself in Section 4, women's groups as such in Section 5. Militant women who forcibly insisted on leading the march were predictably accused of disrupting the unity of the movement by a plaintiff Len Murray: there we are doing our best for these women, and they won't even unite behind us.

The Women (Oh Sister.)

Although there were numerous leaflets detailing and denouncing the specific provisions of the Corrie Bill, what came over most strongly from the women on the demo. was their absolute rejection of the idea that a bunch of MPs should presume to legislate any further on this question. Corrie's proposals were slightly beside the point - it was simply outrageous that he should presume to put them forward.

The distance women have already travelled in thrashing out this issue was apparent in the predominant slogan 'Not the church, not the state, women shall decide their fate', which has of course been current for years but which was now spread a little further. According to the subsequent report in Freedom, (8.11.79), some anarchists were pleasantly surprised to hear it (and quickly developed it into 'Burn the churches, fuck the state, which in turn was taken up by the women.)

SOLIDARITY.

Since Solidarity has always regarded abortion as a vitally important issue, we have produced leaflets for most of the major demonstrations about it, and this time was no exception. In fact, this time there were 2 of them being a bit different. The London Solidarity group decided to do a factual leaflet on the 'menstrual extraction' technique of early abortion using the Karman-type cannula and self-locking syringe to aspirate the contents of the uterus.

Reference had been made in previous leaflets to the 'minisuction' abortion technique but in very general terms without giving much idea of what was involved either in undergoing or administering it. With legal abortion under attack, we thought it was particularly important for women to be aware of all possible options, and to contemplate them with knowledge of the available facts. It is possible that the leaflet might have been modified in one or two respects if we had known more, but even with hindsight we feel its production was justified.

SOME CRITICISMS CONSIDERED.

Many of the people who received the leaflet reacted very favourably, but it has been criticised on several points which are worth going into further.

1. That it was 'neither one thing or the other'. This was deliberate. We wanted more than an unsatisfying allusion which didn't get anyone anywhere, and definitely less than a step-by-step instruction manual. We were addressing women who were already interested enough to want to read the leaflet, intending to let them judge whether

Well brothers...
and er...sister...



their interest survived a closer look, and suggesting some sources for their own research.

2. That it relied much too uncritically on Harvey Karman, who has come into conflict with sections of the women's movement in the U.S and been accused of being a general rip-off merchant. Whatever the truth of this - and we would be interested to see any hard evidence readers can provide - we felt that the particular article on which the leaflet was based had a lot to recommend it, especially its demystification of the medical profession's monopoly of 'expertise' and its patient-centred attitude whose flexibility and sensitivity contrasted favourably with other medical reports. It seemed a convenient way of showing what could be done.

3. Medical aspects (i.e. Karman's clinical practice) open to question. Certainly the article presented a rosier picture than many others on the subject, e.g. the time of aspiration given is very short, and the complication rate very low. Taking it at face value, the differences might be explained by the assumption that the work was done under near-optimum conditions; unfortunately, the cheerful outlook is also compatible with a campaign to market the instrumentation as widely as possible. In any case, reading the relevant literature will show many discrepancies between accounts of the technique by various practitioners. It must be emphasised that there is no substitute for experience and systematic training.



4. Legal position not spelt out clearly enough. To spell it out now: Section 5(2) Of the 1967 Abortion Act (An Act to amend and clarify the law relating to termination of pregnancy by registered medical practitioners) states that 'For the purposes of the law relating to abortion, anything done with intent to procure the miscarriage of a woman is unlawfully done unless authorised by Section 1 of this Act. Section 6 defines 'the law relating to abortion' as Section

Section 58 and 59 of the Offences against the Person Act 1861, and any rule of law relating to the procurement of abortion.' Sections 58 and 59 of the 1861 Offences against the person Act made it a felony for 'any woman to administer to herself poison or other noxious thing or to use an instrument or other means with intent to procure her miscarriage if she were "with child", or for any other person to do so or to supply the means therefore whether she were with child or not.' The maximum penalty under this Act is said to be life imprisonment.

Thus the prosecution would not need to prove that pregnancy existed; but the defence claiming that a procedure was used with quite a different intent would at least complicate the case.

In Scotland, the 1861 Act did not apply, and abortion was a common law offence, the rule having been established that proof of pregnancy was essential to a conviction for attempted abortion. As the Lane Committee Report pointed out, the 1967 Act, with Section 5(2) specifying intent, can be said to have operated restrictively in Scotland (ironic in view of the calls to defend the Act.)

For all of us the only legal option is to plead our case to two registered medical practitioners. Taking the matter into our own hands we could get life.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION.

In view of the above, it is understandable that people have hitherto been extremely cagey about putting anything in writing on the subject of menstrual extraction. Spreading information by word of mouth has advantages for security, but disadvantages for informed discussion - rumour and distortion can substitute for hard facts, and the method is limited to those in the know. Small numbers of articulate, assertive women with the right contacts have always been able to get the easiest, earliest and safest abortions; if this situation is to change, accurate information must be spread more widely.

Of course the printed word is not sacrosanct, but at least it gives us something to go on, to argue with, if necessary to refute point by point. Refutations, arguments and other reactions will be welcome - anonymity and confidentiality of sources respected. Liz W. (London).

REVIEW

THE BUREAUCRACY TREMBLES

"Workers against the Gulag", edited and introduced by Viktor Haynes and Olga Semyonova, Pluto Press, £1.95.

In that it allows workers in struggle to speak for themselves rather than following the traditional left practice of academics and professional revolutionaries speaking about workers as if they were inanimate objects, this book makes a refreshing change. The workers in question are those of the USSR whose combativity and militancy in recent years has sent shivers of fear down the spines of the bureaucracy. Indeed far from being the impregnable, confident monolith of Western Propaganda the Soviet ruling elite is a class of very worried men, so fearful of the workers over whom they rule that they will fall head over heels in their frantic rush to stamp out every and any manifestation of independent self-activity on the part of the working class. This fact is underlined by the fate of the workers whose documents smuggled out to the West in the years 1976 to 1978, make up the bulk of the book. Raids by the secret police, beatings up, interment in so called psychiatric hospitals, long terms of imprisonment and exile, such was the fate of these working men and women whose existence has been reduced by the bureaucracy to a miserable wage slavery, a slavery far more terrible than that experienced by workers in the West.

How the Soviet workers have fought back against the bureaucracy is the subject of this book, and after reading it only the most myopic and intransigent Leninists will still subscribe to the absurd notion that the USSR is a "workers state" (whatever that may be) or in anyway socialist. For if evidence is still needed to combat the mystification and mythology of the trad left this book has more than enough of it to condemn their falsehoods for all eternity.

The first part of the book tells in their own words the story of a group of Soviet workers who, having suffered the common experience of being victimised for complaining against bureaucratic mismanagement, were forced to conclude that the official Soviet trade unions in no way rep-

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resented their interests and therefore resolved to form a Free Trade Union Association of the Soviet Working People. The book's editors describe this Association as, "the first independent workers organisation formed in the Soviet Union since the 1920's." Here one must take issue with them, for although they do not actually say so one nevertheless gains the impression that they subscribe to the Trotskyist article of faith that the USSR was a truly Socialist society until Lenin died, Trotsky was expelled from the Communist Party and the "wicked" Stalin seized power. The truth of the matter is that from the time of their coup d'etat onwards the Bolsheviks constituted a bureaucratic dictatorship over the working class and that by 1918 Lenin was using the terrorists of the Cheka to ruthlessly crush independent working class organisation. Even if the book's editors know no better Eric Heffer, who contributes a preface which, while attacking the Soviet bureaucracy remains silent about the anti-working class activities of every Labour Government, should. His past association with "ultra left" groups should have taught him the truth about Lenin and Leninism if it taught him nothing else.

Although small in numbers (about 400 members) the formation of the Association marked an important stage in the development of the Soviet workers' struggle. Whereas previously Soviet workers had manifested their discontent in spontaneous strikes and riots they were now beginning to set up permanent organisations. The bureaucracy was not slow in recognising the significance of this new development and acted at once to crush the Association before it could gather mass support. The Association's founder Vladimir Klebanov, a Ukrainian miner and many of its members whose biographies are contained in the book found themselves railroaded into psychiatric institutions, for according to official Soviet ideology the desire of workers to organise in opposition to a state which is "theirs" is a symptom of insanity.

The second section of this book deals with two cases of the use of the strike weapon by Soviet workers: the revolt in 1962 in Novocherkassk against massive rises in the prices of meat and dairy produce (always expensive and in short supply) and the strike at Vyshgorod in 1969 against bad housing conditions. At Novocherkassk, in scenes strangely reminiscent of the last days of the

Tsars, troops opened fire on strikers marching beneath red flags. This time, however, it was not the Imperial guard but the Red Army whose bullets found their targets and it was at the feet of a statue of Lenin not a Romanov that the lifeless corpses fell. Solzhenitsyn is right when he calls Novocherkassk a turning point in Russian history, but it is a turn by the workers towards Socialist revolution not in the direction of the feudal past T.L.

which Solzhenitsyn idolises. Those in the West who are fond of celebrating anniversaries (1905, 1917 etc.) would do well to add June 2, 1962 to their list.

The book then goes on to record three letters of protest from Soviet workers who represent three of the ideological trends which are emerging amongst both the dissident intellectuals and the workers - Socialist, slavophil and nationalist. The Socialist worker Nikolay Yevgrafov writes:

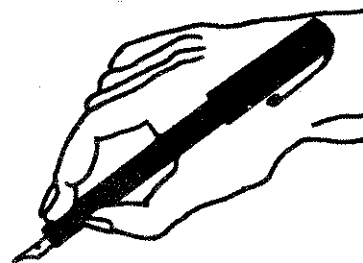
"The aim of Soviet power is to train Soviet people to behave and think mechanically, to organise and stereotype their every thought so that no one will dare cast doubt on the sanctity of the status quo." Anyone who has experienced the internal regime of a Leninist party will know exactly what he means. The plasterer G.A. Bogulyubov states that for him there is no difference between Stalinism and fascism while Bohdan Rebyrk complains that the non-Russian republics of the USSR have become colonies of Moscow and their peoples the victims of a vicious campaign of russification. Without doubt these workers are simple, uneducated souls, but they have a far clearer vision of reality in today's Soviet Union than those well qualified apologists for state-capitalism which abound in our centres of higher education

The fourth part of the book contains the appeals of Soviet workers who have tried to emigrate. What emerges from these appeals is that after 60 years of "communism" the Soviet worker is no better off and in some ways worse off than he/she was in the days of the Tsars, at least the Tsars allowed emigration whereas the Soviet bureaucracy is determined that not one of its citizens shall escape. Only those who have friends in the West who can make a fuss and upset the plans for detente and East-West trade are allowed to leave the Soviet motherland.

The final part of the book is an appeal to workers in the French car industry for help. As the editors point out "it is... essential

that the workers movement in the West should give its support to all those fighting for human rights in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe". No libertarian would deny this, but if this struggle is to be effective then it must be fought not only against the Soviet bureaucrats but also against all the exponents of state-capitalism in the West who will seek to use it for their own ends.

LETTERS



The second letter has been edited primarily due to lack of space.

ANTI-SEXISM
SOLIDARITY No's 8&9.

Dear All,

I am inspired to write by the general bad temper flying about over the anti-sexist debate, though other things get dragged in along the way.

Some time ago I wrote a piece entitled 'Women's Liberation and Male Sychophancy' which appeared in Solidarity (London). I wrote it with as much cool as I could muster given that a long lasting relationship had broken down taking part of my head with it. I was obsessed with the consequences of the general assumptions of the women's movement of men because I felt that I had myself been double bound and given a good kicking as a result of them. The article, I feel, was worth writing.

But the trouble is, then as now, that in any movement what is generally true of the ideas within it is not necessarily true of the ideas of any individual. The uses to which the ideas are put are many and various and the people involved can be everything from brave as lions with generous hearts and heads to morally shoddy, socially vicious and deeply unhappy. In a recent copy of WIRES (the women's internal news-sheet) there were two highly contrasting pieces. One was a crisp analysis of trot manoeuvres and hypocrisies in the women's movement which would have

done Solidarity credit. The other was a piece whose sense could be summed up by this: Kill men? Why not? They Kill us.'

So what are we going to do with that G.W? Describe the women's movement as anti-trot man killers? Or vegetarian lesbians? Or carnivorous heterosexuals? Or any other position which is a logically possible combination of existing ideas. Are we going to be pleased that two letters in response to your article were perfect examples of the parody you were presenting.

We should own up, you and me, G.W. Human beings, probably because of the long dependence by the child on the parents (and in our culture that means overwhelmingly the mother) are left with a difficult struggle for psychological autonomy long after we are physically capable of looking after ourselves. All of us men grow up wounded with our mothers in our mind trying to go through our private cupboards and us trying to hold them shut. The process is not helped by the structural miseries of the adolescent sexual market place, from which it is very possible that everybody comes out feeling a victim. Some similar process involving a father/mother combination is true for women. Across a battle scarred landscape fraternisation then takes place, truces are established, children are born and the whole damn thing starts off again.

But the male struggle for psychological independence of the mother, with all its guilt, its love, its hostility, is powerfully re-awakened by the attacks on men by sections of the women's movement. Men are the heavy father, the rapist, the batterer, the creepy voice down the telephone. But for men who are none of these things accepting guilt by association, by possessing the equipment with intent as it were, is a regressive step to the infantile. Yet an aggressive and hostile response furthers polarisation, increases the potential for male hurtfulness and clenches the head tight shut. The only possible path to liberation is transcendence which is by no means easy. It is a path that some women are after as well as some men. WE SHOULD BE FINDING THEM NOT DRIVING THEM OFF

BY AN INDISCRIMINATE USE OF THE TAR BRUSH.

Can I suggest therefore that we do with the womens movement what we have done with other areas of politics? Use the words written down, the magazine articles the

books and so on, locate the kinds of debate going on and the different factions involved and try and tell the truth to the best of our ability. If condemnation or critique is in order let the words they use be the basis of it. If we wish to attack groups of professional women lobbying for tax advantages over men, or the Society for cutting up men, or women from Trot or Stalinist groups becoming union organisers or the radical lesbian treatment of male children let us say that is what we are attacking not the womens movement. If we wish to condemn a movement as a whole as phallicidal or reformist we have to prove it first. And when some upset and unhappy women manages to kick us in the oedipus we should realise that its natures way of telling us we're not straight yet.

Peace and Quiet,

John Q.

'THE TENDER TRAP' SOLIDARITY No 10.

As to Luciente's proposals, they are as mindless and dogmatic as her/his history.

The couple relationship is private and exclusive, we are told. Well, so are close friendships - so what? What is the alternative to a private relationship? Presumably a public one. And what meaning could a public relationship have except one in which public interference takes place? Such an alternative is worthy of Khmers Rouges, not libertarians. Haven't we a right to a private life, and is it not a characteristic of personal relations that they are private? Aren't personal relations of necessity exclusive, since they can only be formed with a small number of people at a time? Haven't we the right to exclude certain people from our lives - and haven't we the duty to consider our friends' feelings? I don't know what sort of society Luciente wants, but I want one in which I have close friends and a private life, not just comrades and endless political meetings.

What I find particularly repulsive about Luciente's conclusions is that they constitute an attempt to draw up a rational model for personal relations. But relationships have to come not from some idea of what they ought to be, but from our needs. To form them on the basis of an idea of what they ought to be, whatever

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contrast to illusions about Vietnamese "liberation":

"Vietnams invasion was by no means motivated by any concern for the sufferings of the people of Cambodia. The Vietnamese have told us that during 1975-76 they repatriated Cambodian refugees to the Pol Pot regime. Even the most casual observer of Cambodian affairs would have known that this was a certain sentence of death. The Vietnamese concern for human rights violation began in 1978 as part of Vietnam's long and meticulous ideological preparation for the Christmas invasion.

The core of the aim of this invasion was the establishment of a "special relationship" with Cambodia, an aim clearly outlined at the Fourth Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party of 1977. The "special relationship" is the Vietnamese euphemism for the imposition in Cambodia of a Government which was open (as in Laos) to their military, diplomatic and economic predominance.

Such a relationship exists now between Hanoi and the puppet regime of Heng Samrin."

Letter of R. Manne to "The Guardian" (3.3.79)

But what of popular resistance to these "leaders" whose arrogance extends to believing in their right to "punish" whole countries, who "lose face" if their soldiers don't kill in larger quantities than they die? We know just about nothing of any resistance, but that doesn't mean there isn't any. On it depends whether 1984 is already here.

Stefan

'analysis' such an idea proceeds from, is to form them on the basis of morality. It is because they form their relations on such a moral basis that those who try 'multiple relationships' suffer such agonies.

Socialism does not mean cudgelling the emotions into line, and there is no reason (other than a moral reason) why one should control jealousy any more than the lust Luciente writes about. Socialism means creating the social conditions which allow the satisfaction of our needs. Drawing up schemes of what relationships should be like reflects the inability to let be and the desire always to interfere, to mould, to improve and to correct. It is the essence of authoritarianism.

Yours fraternally,

Marshall Colman

South East Asia: 4 years to 1984

"It became known, with extreme suddenness and everywhere at once, that Eastasia and not Eurasia was the enemy."

-George Orwell, "1984"

In his "1984", written in 1948, Orwell foretold a world divided among three totalitarian States - Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia. These correspond approximately to the West, the USSR and China. Perpetual inconclusive warfare in border areas serves to maintain the war hysteria which cements the power of the ruling Party of each State. Every few years the two-against-one line-up of the powers changes, and the records of the previous alliance rewritten.

Orwell didn't do too badly. For years after World War 2, conflict raged (remember Korea?) between the West and the Russia-China alliance. A politician, now a non-person, recalls of 1957:

"I remember once in Peking, Mao and I were lying next to the swimming pool in our bathing trunks, discussing the problems of war and peace..." "Listen, Comrade Khrushchev" he said, "All you have to do is provoke the Americans into military action, and I'll give you as many divisions as you need to crush them - 100, 200, 1000 divisions." I tried to explain to him that one or two missiles could turn all the divisions in China to dust. But he wouldn't even listen to my arguments and obviously regarded me as a coward."

("Khrushchev Remembers", Andre Deutsch 1971)

But the "comrades" fell out; Oceanians and Eurasians were taught to fear the yellow hordes. No longer, it was said, does a pessimist prepare for the future

by studying Russian - now he studies Chinese. Ky - the American puppet President of Vietnam who admired Hitler - complained in an interview with the journalist Oriana Fallaci: Kissinger felt safe in abandoning his regime because he trusted a Soviet dominated Indochina to contain the USA's main enemy, China.

And now British Colonels tell the Chinese troops that Russia is the common enemy. Through their client States, Russia and China have their first full-scale war - for control of Indochina.

WHY?

The most obvious motives are the strategic calculations which flow from the logic of military confrontation. The Vietnam Government doesn't want enemies on two fronts (Cambodia and China) so they invade Cambodia. But neither does the Chinese Government want enemies on two fronts (Vietnam and Russia), so they invade Vietnam. The best means of defence is attack. One war is fought to be in a stronger position to fight the next war.

A Guardian article points out that, while the war is on land the main object of contention may be the South China Sea between Vietnam and the Philippines. A vast area of this sea, including many islands and valuable oil fields controlled by Vietnam, is marked on Chinese maps as part of China. The disputed area also cuts across key naval and trade routes.

Well, ruling classes have always sent their slaves off to kill one another to defend economic, military and territorial interests of this kind. But this carnage scores one first - all States in-

involved plunder in the name of Socialism! All pay homage to Lenin, who rose to power on the slogan "Turn the Imperialist War into Revolutionary Civil War!". All play "The Internationale" which contains the hopeful threat: "You do not yet know Our bullets are for our own generals."

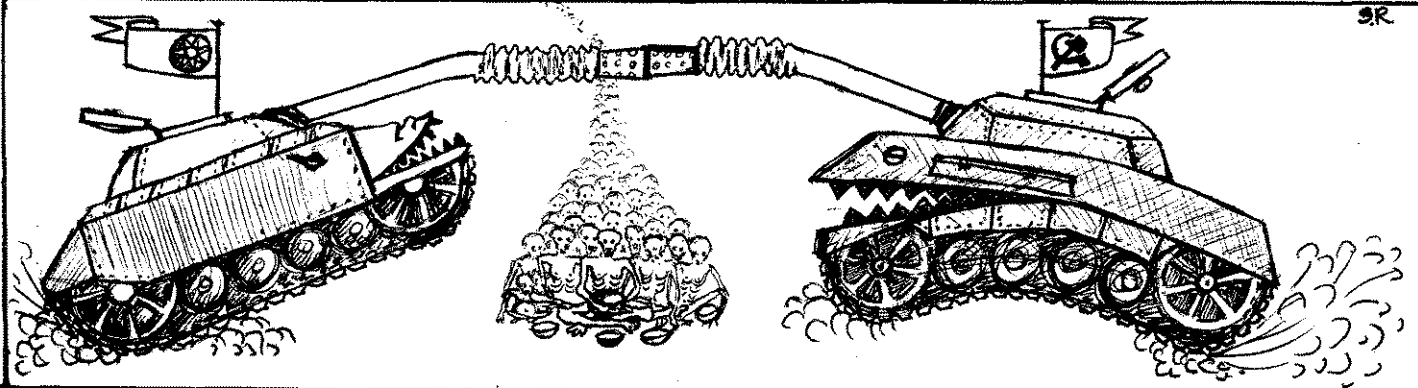
No wonder the small ads for Central committee Agitprop jobs say: "Only experienced dialecticians need apply".

A glance in light of current events back on the protest movement in the sixties against American occupation of South Vietnam, The "heroic guerrilla fighters against imperialism" are now themselves the troops of an imperialist State. In their takeover of Indochina, as in fact their takeover of South Vietnam, they rely not on the romanticised gore of guerrilla warfare but on the mechanised gore of Soviet tanks and artillery.

The Vietnamese occupation is a "liberation" of a kind for the Cambodian peasants - a relief from the barbaric despotism of the military caste of the Khmers Rouges. In his book "Cambodia Year Zero", Francois Ponchaud summarised the life of the survivors as "unending labour, too little food, wretched sanitary conditions, terror and summary executions." To restore rice exports to finance industrialisation, the Khmers Rouges had turned Cambodia into a single rural concentration camp. Ponchaud explains their policies by referring to doctoral theses submitted to French Universities by students who became Khmer Rouge leaders. The Chairman of the State Presidium, Khieu Samphan, did his on "The Economy of Cambodia and its problems of industrialisation".

The revolting methods of the Cambodian regime should not lead us by

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19



The limits of Mattick's economics

Economic law & class struggle

by Ron Rothbart

INTRODUCTION TO SUPPLEMENT

Solidarity, particularly through the publication of Paul Cardan's work, has developed a well founded and time tested critique of economic determinism as espoused by the theoreticians of Social-democratic marxism and its offshoot - Leninism. We have also demonstrated that the roots of this determinism can be traced back to the original works of Marx and especially of Engels.

Against the determinism of official marxism we have stressed the creative role of the working class and the importance of socialist consciousness. Against the ahistorical and voluntarist concepts of traditional anarchism we have stressed the importance of understanding the specific historical terrain on which we must work.

We have tried to understand modern capitalism as it emerges into the late 20th century and NOT promote politics which are radical only by the standards of the 19th century. In this process however, we have perhaps been guilty of stepping too far ahead in our estimation of how

rapidly capitalism has moved beyond the realm of market competition towards a totally bureaucratic economy. We have not considered that so long as capitalism on a world scale remains a highly competitive system, aspects of Marx's original analysis might remain valid.

The article republished in our supplement is from the excellent first edition of 'Red Eye'. It does not attempt to deal with 'official' marxism, but attempts to reconcile the minority marxist current represented by Paul Mattick and the council communist movement, with the libertarian tradition represented here by Paul Cardan and 'Zerowork' (whose views appear similar to those expressed by John King in Solidarity No6.)

This article will be readily accessible to those readers with an understanding of economics and especially marxist economics. Others will probably find it difficult to follow, although I consider it worth persevering with.

Mike Solidarity(Manchester).

Mattick's virtue, his marxian approach, beside which Baran and Sweezy are revealed as quasi-keynesian (1), is at the same time his vice, or at least marks the limits of his perspective. From Mattick's point of view, the dynamics of capitalism can be comprehended by an understanding of the laws of capital accumulation. These laws ultimately lead the process of accumulation to an impasse, to a point where profits are insufficient for further accumulation. Far from resolving capitalism's classical contradictions, state intervention is only an admission that they persist. The contradictions reappear as a cancerous growth of unproductive expenditures. The "mixed economy", no less than the market economy, has limits, limits determined by its internal contradictions. Sooner or later these contradictions will become insurmountable. As a result, class struggle may well intensify and become revolutionary in character. The possibility of revolution hinges on the internal contradictions of the economy.

In this sort of analysis, the working class is only "tacitly present"; that is, its appearance as a revolutionary class is anticipated and even implied (given other assumptions about its subjective capacities) by the theory of collapse, but until that point its struggle is not seen as having a qualitative impact on the economy. The struggle over wages and working conditions takes place within the confines of the law of value. The laws of accumulation—specifically the law of the tendential fall of the rate of profit—which define the dynamic of the system

incorporate this struggle as a struggle over the rate of exploitation, one of the variables of accumulation. The class struggle is, as it were, submerged by the "laws of motion" of the economy, and does not violate them.

An alternative theory which postulates *class struggle* as the dynamic of capitalism was developed in the late 50's and early 60's by Cornelius Castoriadis (A.K.A. Paul Cardan), principal theoretician of the French group *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. More recently, an American journal *Zerowork*, influenced by an Italian theoretical current, has come out with an analysis of the current crisis which bears certain similarities to Castoriadis' approach. Also, in Britain, Glyn and Sutcliffe, in their book *British Capitalism and the Profit Squeeze*, put forward a view of the British situation in the late 60's similar to that of Castoriadis and *Zerowork*. It is no accident that someone strongly influenced by Mattick, David Yaffe, has opposed their view. Although one could make reference to other tendencies and other authors, in what follows I will use Mattick as representative of one approach and Castoriadis and *Zerowork* as representative of an opposing approach. (2)

The issue of this opposition dates back at least to the 30's when Karl Korsch flirted with the notion—and then rejected it(3)—that after 1850 Marx's own theory turned progressively into a determinism which ignored class struggle. Korsch decided it was only a matter of a change in *emphasis* and that

the Marx of class struggle and the Marx of a "contradiction between productive forces and relations of production" complemented each other. (4)

Castoriadis, however, portrayed Marx as a determinist, and argued that Marx's economic theories don't hold water. I'm not going to try to deal here in full with Castoriadis' characterization of and arguments against Marx. Whether or not they are valid, the motivation for Castoriadis' anti-Marxism is important. He aimed to oppose what is generally, or popularly, considered to be "Marxism"—determinism and economic reductionism—with a "new" theoretical starting point. The crisis of society, he argued, is not a narrowly economic one, but a crisis of the whole social fabric; it has to do with everything men and women face in their everyday life. What is important, according to Castoriadis, is not the contradictions of the economic system—but whatever bears upon the radical transformation of society by the *self-activity* of people. "Self-activity is the central theoretical category," he says. A sympathetic reading of Marx would show that in fact self-activity and capital as its very negation, is a central category of his work. Castoriadis however, in his unsympathetic reading, *opposes* this category to the Marx of economic law.

According to Castoriadis, Marx's failure to take self-activity into account in his economic theories has rendered them obsolete. Contrary to Marx's expectation, the rate of exploitation (also called the rate of surplus-value) had not continually risen but instead, in the advanced capitalist countries, remained constant for some time. (5) What Marx hadn't counted on, said Castoriadis, was the power of the working class to achieve through struggle a continuous rise in wages. Moreover, in spite of this rise, capitalism had not collapsed, but had prospered. Through the expansion of an internal market and conscious intervention in the economy by the state, the system, though not free of recessions, was maintaining itself with no profound economic crisis; and, moreover, none could be expected simply on the basis of insoluble contradictions of the accumulation process. If the system were to fall into crisis, it would be due to contradictions arising from the bureaucratization of society, which for Castoriadis is the *essential* tendency of capitalism, and from class struggle, which for Castoriadis is the *real* dynamic of capitalism.

Discussing the current situation in his introduction to the 1974 edition of *Modern Capitalism and Revolution*, Castoriadis saw no reason to change his viewpoint. There he argues that the main cause of the rising rate of inflation has been the increasing pressure. . . of all 'wage and salary earners' for higher incomes, shorter hours of work, and to an increasing extent, changes in their conditions of work." The international consequences of this rise in the rate of inflation due to social struggles, combined with other irrational factors he considers "extrinsic to the economy" (e.g. politically motivated decisions of a president), could result, he says, in a serious economic crisis, but this "would not have been the outcome of those factors which the marxist conception considers operative and fundamental."

At the end of 1975, the journal *Zerowork* came out with an analysis of the current crisis which, like Castoriadis', focuses on class struggle.

From the capitalist viewpoint every crisis appears to be the outcome of a mysterious network of economic "laws" and relations moving and developing with a life of its own. . . . Our class analysis proceeds from the opposite viewpoint, that of the working class. As a class relation, capital is first of all a power struggle. Capital's "flaws" are not internal to it and nor is the crisis; they are determined by the dynamics of working class struggle. . . .

The contemporary Left sees the crisis from the point of view of economists, that is, from the viewpoint of capital. . . . For the Left the working class could not have brought about the crisis; it is rather an innocent victim of the internal contradictions of capital, a subordinate element in a contradictory whole. This is why the Left is preoccupied with the defense of the working class. (6)

For *Zerowork*, Keynesianism was a capitalist strategy based on a new relation with the working class growing out of previous struggles. "Full employment" had been *imposed* on capital. Capital's counter-strategy consisted in recouping increasing wages by means of inflation, expanding the internal consumer market and instituting productivity schemes. The cycle of struggles of the late 60's and early 70's, characterized by the "refusal of work", an initiative tending to separate income from work (in which a strategic unity of the waged and the unwaged plays an essential role), *imposes* the new crisis on capital. In effect, continually rising income claims of all sectors of the working class combined with increased absenteeism, "crimes against property", high employee turnover, sabotage, opposition to productivity schemes, etc., tend to sever income from productivity and thus cut into capitalist profit margins. The working class ruins the Keynesian balancing act by making incomes rise faster than productivity. Capital responds with a strategy of planned crisis aiming to re-enforce the tie between income and work.

Zerowork's theses bring to the fore the rate of exploitation. They see active intervention on the part of the working class, *reducing* the rate of exploitation, as the initial cause of the current crisis. "The crisis is characterized by an unprecedented decline in the rate of exploitation." (7)

In Britain, where Glyn and Sutcliffe have tried to give evidence for a similar viewpoint, their thesis has been put into question by David Yaffe, who interprets the evidence differently.

Glyn and Sutcliffe's and *Zerowork's* thesis is actually stronger than Castoriadis'. I must distinguish them before discussing Glyn/Sutcliffe and Yaffe. Castoriadis argued in 1974 that wage pressure (as well as demands for shorter hours and changes in working conditions) was inflationary and that hyperinflation had a *destabilizing effect* on the world economy. A change in workers' behavior during economic downturns had resulted in a world recession. "The decisive factor here is a secular change in the behavior of wage and salary earners who have come to consider as granted an increase in their real incomes, year in, year out. . . ." whatever the state of the economy. Allowing unemployment to rise to catastrophic levels could do away with this expectation (indeed it has), but only at the cost of creating a potentially explosive situation. There is no talk here of wage increases cutting into profit margins. What is important for Castoriadis is "self-activity", the fact that workers ceased to behave as manipulable objects, moderating their demands in response to planned downturns. It is not necessary for Castoriadis' argument that wage pressure actually resulted in increased *real* wages, only that it *started* an inflationary spiral that led to international monetary instability, which had deleterious effects on world trade.

Zerowork's argument is similar in that its main purpose is to explore how the working class breaks out of the capitalists' attempts to maintain it as a predictable "factor of production" and becomes a fighting unity. What Castoriadis calls a "secular change in behavior" *Zerowork* sees as the "political recomposition of the working class". Where *Zerowork* differs from Castoriadis is in emphasizing income pressure other than wage demands (welfare, shoplifting, self-reduction of transportation fares, meat boycott, etc.), and at least implying that income demands, combined with struggles which reduce productivity, are the cause of the *profitability crisis*. In this last matter, *Zerowork* resembles Glyn and Sutcliffe.

Glyn and Sutcliffe's argument is based on statistics which they claim show that in Britain between 1964 and 1970 profits fell while wages rose as a share of the national income. Yaffe attacks their use of the statistics and tries to show that in fact, there was in this period a *decline* in the share of *net real wages* and salaries (after tax) in national income. At the same time, productivity increased at a faster rate than real wages after tax. In other words, the rate of exploitation continued to *rise*. If this is correct, a Glyn and Sutcliffe/*Zerowork* type analysis fails to get at the source of the profitability crisis. It can't be due to a simple drop in the rate of exploitation, to real wages rising faster than productivity.

For Yaffe, there's a problem with the rate of exploitation, but it arises from modern capitalism's internal contradictions rather than from workers' militancy. Like Mattick, Yaffe sees modern capitalism creating a demand for surplus value that it can't adequately supply. Since progressively more capital is involved in state production, the total profits earned are drawn from a base of private capital formation which, relatively speaking, is dwindling. In this situation, the only way to maintain the general rate of profit is to raise the rate of exploitation faster than before. "In order that state expenditure can be financed out of surplus value produced in the private sector of the economy, the rate of exploitation must be increased faster than before to prevent an actual fall in the rate of profit and a faster rate of inflation."



Yaffe's argument is based on an understanding that variable capital consists only of wages paid to productive workers, i.e. those workers involved in surplus value production. The rate of exploitation is not determined by the general level of wages but by the ratio of the total income of productive workers to the surplus value produced. Thus, a general rise in wages and a continued rise in the rate of exploitation are compatible if the number of productive workers remains relatively stable or decreases while productivity makes substantial gains. This is the theoretical basis for arguing that the rate of exploitation has continued to rise in Britain. However, more and more of the surplus-value produced has been allocated to unproductive expenditures, has gone not only into state production and social services but also finance and commerce. In other words, the productive sphere has been drained, or "looted," by the unproductive spheres. Though productivity has continued to rise, it has not risen fast enough to produce a mass of profit sufficient to meet all the demands made on the total surplus-value by both the productive and the unproductive spheres. The inflationary spiral is a result of the fact that the demand on the total mass of profit exceeds its supply. Workers certainly have been struggling, struggling to keep the price of their commodity, labor-power, up with other prices, but the basic cause of the inflation is increased unproductive expenditures, which in turn rise largely because of government attempts to keep up the level of production, and thus employment, in spite of chronic stagnation due fundamentally to the tendential fall of the rate of profit. At the present time, British capitalists are trying to hold down wages and restructure industry which involves laying off workers—in order to raise productivity and thus further increase the rate of exploitation. (8)

For both Yaffe and Mattick, the insufficient rise in productivity is primarily a result of and in turn a cause of declining profitability. Since the post-war recessions did not and could not result in classical capitalist expansion, but rather only in an expansion in state production superimposed on real stagnation, the investment in new plant necessary for a sufficient rise in productivity could not take place. The lag in productivity results fundamentally from the internal contradictions of capital, has its source in the tendential fall of the rate of profit which cannot be reversed through Keynesian policies.

It would be naive to assume that what is at issue here is simply a question of fact. *Zerowork* presents its analysis as a basis for understanding working-class strategy in this period and as a basis for revolutionary organization. It proposes and allies itself with demands that further separate income from work or claim income for previously unwaged labor (e.g. wages for housework). Those influenced by Mattick's analysis tend to concern themselves with various working class strategies as responses to deteriorating conditions. (9) Both focus on similar means and forms of struggle, and both emphasize working class autonomy. But, in relation to one another, the one emphasizes the offensive and is more "voluntarist", while the other emphasizes the defensive aspect of struggle and leans in a "spontaneist" direction. *Zerowork* poses the issue starkly and polemically and claims there's no mid-ground between what it calls the "capitalist viewpoint" that the crisis arises from internal contradictions of the economy and what it calls the "working class viewpoint" that it is imposed on capital by the working class. However, the two viewpoints are not necessarily as mutually exclusive as *Zerowork* claims.

Mattick often points out that the classical marxian account of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall takes place on a high level of abstraction and doesn't exhaust the discussion of profitability, which also has to take into account the complexities of real, concrete capitalism. Marx's analysis, after all, abstracts from competition and assumes the existence of only two classes in a purely capitalist environment. Also, for Marx, the famous tendency of the rate of profit to fall is only a tendency, a consequence and expression of the increasing social productivity of labor, which is counteracted by other tendencies: rationalization, shortening the time of capital turnover (through improved transportation and communication) opening up of new spheres of production that have a low organic composition and thus high rate of profit, devaluation of capital in crisis, importing cheap foodstuffs and cheap raw materials, opening up of new areas for profitable capital investment and increasing the rate of exploitation. A tendency of the rate of exploitation to rise is bound up with the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, these two opposed tendencies both following from the increasing social productivity of labor. But a conscious attempt of the capitalists to raise or maintain profits by raising the rate of exploitation through lowering wages and intensifying labor (speed-up) has a more immediate political impact. (10) These means of raising the rate of exploitation degrade and exhaust the laborers, leading them, in the classical conception, to overthrow the system. "The mass of misery, oppression, degradation, exploitation [grows]; but with this too grows the revolt of the working class." (11)

The tendency of the rate of profit to fall and these counter-tendencies form a dynamic which underlies and determines the character of capital accumulation, explains the crisis-ridden nature of capitalism, and is the context of the struggle, both among capitalists and between classes, over the division of surplus-value. For Mattick, following Henryk Grossman, the ultimate significance of a falling rate of profit is that it limits the growth of the mass of profit, and the mass becomes insufficient at some point for the profitable expansion of private capital.

Refutations and emendations of Marx, as well as defenses, often deal with the counter-tendencies to the fall of the rate of profit, both their power to preserve the system and their limits. Imperialistic expansion proved quite effective for capital up to a point; world war itself served to literally destroy capital, as Mattick argues, re-creating conditions for a period of expansion

when growing monopolization hindered devaluation in crises; Taylorization of the labor-process is said to have allowed for increasing output and thus raising wages without decreasing the rate of exploitation, (12) and this in turn allowed for an expansion of the internal market; credit expansion has been another factor; state-intervention often involves rationalization; transportation and communications have improved phenomenally, cutting down the time of capital turnover.

Mattick concerns himself in part with the counter-tendencies to the counter-tendencies, their *limits*. For example, advertising costs, associated with an expanded internal market for the monopolistic consumer industries, are a drain on surplus value; "profits" made in state production are really a drain on surplus value. While Castoriadis rejects Marx's theory, claiming the rate of exploitation has not risen, and Zerowork claims the crisis is the result of the working class' *reducing* the rate of exploitation, Mattick reasserts the classical theory, pointing to the limits inherent in the means used to preserve the system and anticipating a point at which the *reaching of these limits* will provoke a *sharpening of the struggle* over the rate of exploitation.

Alan Jones tries to resolve the debate between Yaffe and Glyn and Sutcliffe this way:

At the onset of conjunctural crisis, notably when the process of accumulation falters, it is perfectly possible, indeed, inevitable, for direct struggle over the rate of exploitation to function as the cause of the onset of overt crisis. . . . There is nothing contradictory whatever in understanding that in the final analysis the reason for the decline in the rate of profit is the changes in the organic composition of capital and in understanding that in a particular capitalism, in a particular time, the dominant element in the crisis is played by a direct struggle between the working class and the bourgeoisie over the rate of surplus-value.

In fact, the rise in the rate of exploitation has slowed as "a result of May 1968 and the continued combativity of the working class. The rise in the rate of exploitation was thus slowed down by the resistance of the workers and therefore no longer exercised sufficient force to counteract the negative effect of the rise in the organic composition of capital". (13)

Such an approach seems to me most fruitful because it allows us to take into account both the economic system and the class struggle, without imagining that either is autonomous of the other or completely determined by the other. It allows us to recognize the working class as an active factor within the context of an economic system that has internal contradictions.

The working class does not merely arrive *post facto* to save the world from the misery which capitalism has wrought. If the crisis demonstrates that capitalism has not solved its internal contradictions and, as Yaffe argues, needs to raise the rate of exploitation faster than previously, it also demonstrates that the working class has not become an integrated, manipulable component of the system, but is capable of *self-activity*. Its combativity becomes an obstacle to the functioning of a system which has its own exigencies.

Because of the *different levels of abstraction* on which this discussion takes place — Mattick and Yaffe abstract and theoretical, Cardan and Zerowork more empirical — the relationship and possibly complementary character of the two views is obscured. In the 30's, Anton Pannekoek criticized the economic theories of Mattick's mentor, Henryk Grossman, for leaving out human intervention. Mattick answered:

Even for Grossman there are no "purely economic" problems; yet this did not prevent him, in his analysis of the law of accumulation, to restrict himself for *methodological reasons* to the definition of purely economic pre-suppositions and of thus coming to *theoretically* apprehend an objective limiting point of the system. The *theoretical* cognition that the capitalist system must, because of its contradictions, necessarily run up against the crash *does not at all entail* that the real crash is an automatic process, independent of men. (14)

Mattick does not remain on the level of abstraction that Grossman did in his crisis theory. He relates the pure model to phenomena of modern capitalism. But he does tend to deal with the economy in abstraction from class struggle. Mattick is well aware of the limits of Grossman's and by implication of his own approach, and accepts them as self-imposed limits for methodological reasons. All one can say on the basis of an analysis of the developmental tendencies of capitalism, he says, is that crises will occur and "offer the possibility of a transformation of the class struggle within the society into a struggle for another form of society." Economic theory can only "give consciousness of the objective conditions in which the class struggle must evolve and determine its orientation." (15)

Although, as a temporary methodological procedure, this separation of economic theory can be justified, still, any permanent hypostatization of economic theory must be questioned. As Geoffrey Kay, discussing Yaffe, puts it;

The conventional interpretation of the law (of the falling rate of profit) can be attacked. . . for objectifying the economic process and thereby separating the class struggle from the accumulation of capital. . . . The proletariat remains in the background. . . . The law as conventionally understood. . . cannot yield any real understanding of the death crisis of capital as the birth pangs of a new form of society. . . can tell us nothing about the class that will make the revolution. . . By objectifying economics and denying the proletariat any active and qualitative role in the creation of the crisis, Marxist economists have denied themselves any possibility for systematically analyzing the class struggle in its concrete forms, and lifting the problem of the political organization of the working class out of the limbo of ideological rhetoric. (16)

* * * * *

The approach which analyzes recent developments in terms of class struggle is commonly applied to Italy, since its post-war competitiveness was based in part on low wages. "It was above all cheap domestic labor which financed Italy's post-war economic recovery," say one set of commentators.

The export industrialists were thus able to sell their products at stable or falling prices while maintaining profit margins high enough to self-finance further industrial expansion. . . . Once the industrial workers demanded higher wages, the whole house of cards began to collapse. . . . For over a decade now it has been the class struggle, and especially, though not exclusively, the consequent rising cost of labor, that has determined Italian economic cycles. (17)

The Italian steel, automotive and chemical industries were developed after the war with advanced technology, which allowed Italy to take advantage of the post-war liberalization of trade. Repression of the labor movement guaranteed low wages.

In the late 50's and early 60's, various factors contributed to a heightening of workers' militancy. One was the increased parcelization of work and the process of de-skilling, which began to break down old hierarchies in the workforce. Another was the reduction of unemployment as a result of the "economic miracle." The new unity and strength of the working class manifested itself in the strike wave of 1962, which won a substantial wage increase.

In response, the capitalists first raised prices and then, in 1963, clamped down on credit to combat inflation. The rate of investment had already been falling. The credit squeeze further reduced investment and a three-year recession followed, during which capitalists restructured factories for greater productivity. Production rose while wages fell. A period of upswing followed, but it was based on labor discipline rather than increased investment. In general, the Italian economy has been stagnating since 1963. As another commentator observes,

The temporary weakness [of the Italian working class] allowed a further spurt of growth in 1966-68, but this was obtained essentially by speedup, with next to no investments in more modern technology . . . Since 1963-64, Italian capitalists have been investing very little, and the increasing technological lag has made Italian exports less and less competitive." (18)



unemployed youth,
Rome 1977. The banner reads: AGAINST
WAGE LABOR

The effects of rationalization on the conditions of work, as well as deteriorating urban living conditions, led to the "hot autumn" of 1969. As a response to speedup, workers struggled to gain more control over the organization and pace of work, as well as for higher wages. In order to do this they had to struggle against unions as well as employers and create autonomous organizational forms: general assemblies, factory councils and industrial zone councils. In this period workers won both substantial wage increases and some power to counter the employers' restructuring projects.

As usual, the capitalists then raised prices and tightened credit. However, the recession of 1970-72 did not bring about the hoped for reduction of militancy and wages continued to rise. Italy's problems then accelerated under the effects of economic instability on the global level. On top of rising labor costs and resistance to restructuring, Italian capital had to contend with world-wide hyperinflation and deteriorating market conditions. As the cost of imports, especially food and oil, rose, and markets for Italian goods contracted, Italy's trade deficit became insupportable and the country was forced to depend on unprecedented levels of international credit to avoid formal bankruptcy.

The current capitalist offensive involves increasing overtime, cutting out holidays, implementing speedups, and trying to impede the working of a sliding scale of wages. The attempt to link a new IMF loan to the subversion of the sliding scale was successfully resisted by workers in the spring of 1977.

Italian capitalism's long-term strategy is to destroy the degree of homogeneity attained by the working class struggle in recent years by decentralizing component operations and extending automation and to convert industry to capital goods production, which will require labor mobility and a long period of very high unemployment. Workers have responded with wildcat strikes, sabotage, autonomous organization, expropriations, self-reduction, etc.

What's apparent in all this is a progressively intensifying struggle over the rate of exploitation. At least since the war, the strength of Italian capital seems to have depended on a disciplined workforce. Every time the Italian working class began to break its bonds, economic expansion was retarded and the ruling class was forced to respond by tightening the screws. Every working class victory on the wage front was met with increased prices, managed recession and an attack on the labor process. In the face of deteriorating trade conditions and without a docile working class, the Italians had to turn to international borrowing. Domestic capital investment, lagging since 1963, was only available before that because of domestic cheap labor.

While this empirical account gives the intensification of the struggle over the rate of exploitation in Italy concreteness and specificity and indicates how it has been leading to direct action and autonomous organization, it doesn't really justify the conclusion that the Italian crisis is "caused" by working class activity. We are drawn back into asking why post-war Italian expansion necessitated low wages, into noting that it was based on investment in new industries in a period of post-war reconstruction and that after that no substantial investment was forthcoming. If the working class precipitated the Italian crisis, it was because Italian capital was so *vulnerable* to worker self-activity. We are dealing with a system that can't tolerate working class victories, a system with little room for maneuver.

Looking for "causes", we would be drawn back into the pre-war period and asking general questions about the crisis of capital between the wars and the means used by the capitalists to extricate themselves from this crisis, in other words asking the very questions Mattick tries to answer in *Marx and Keynes*.

It was Britain's chronic low investment, as well as the combativity of the British working class from 1910 on, that served as an impetus to Keynes' theories. And it is in Britain that Keynesian policies have been most extensively applied and that the limits of the mixed economy are most evident. An obsolete industrial plant, a constantly expanding state budget, relatively high social services expenditures, and a large and growing state industrial sector, are all a result of the long-term low profitability which has made Britain unattractive to private investors and uncompetitive on the world market. In 1976 the most sensational manifestation of these conditions was the steep fall in the value of the pound. In order to resolve its monetary problems, Britain would have to become competitive (preferably in a situation where world trade is expanding). And in order to do this it would have to decrease unit labor costs, i.e. increase productivity while restraining wage rates. In the 60's British industry tried to do so by tying wage increases to various organizational measures that would increase productivity, and by initiating an incomes policy. But this proved ineffective, both because of growing working class militancy, including a growing tendency to reject productivity deals, and because it has become apparent that large injections of capital are necessary to re-establish profitability.

One could say that the wave of struggles in the late 60's and early 70's plunged Britain over the brink into a more or less bankrupt state in which it is dependent on the IMF (at least until the expected oil revenues materialize). But this has to be understood in the context of chronic economic stagnation. (19) A 1973 article on Britain sums up the situation in this way:

British capital, handicapped by decades of low investment, requires a substantially increased share if it is to meet successfully the growing pressures of international competition. The unprecedented level of wage demands and wage settlements in the last five years . . . clearly accentuated this problem. Moreover, workers' readiness to

cooperate, through productivity bargaining, in the more intensified exploitation of labor has to a large degree evaporated since the end of the 1960's. (20)

The global problem capitalist economists refer to as the "capital shortage" weighs heavily on Britain, as well as Italy.

Nowhere is the capital crisis more acute than in Britain and Italy. . . . Britain must invest some \$45-billion in new plant and equipment to become competitive with its Common Market neighbors and with such trade rivals as Japan. In fact, the British government estimates [in 1975] that investment in manufacturing will fall . . . (21)

So capitalist planners speak in terms of "correcting the balance between consumption and production," i.e. lowering wages and unproductive expenses in the hopes that this will make funds available for investment.

However, politicians must weigh the possibility of intensified class struggle, which cutting into wages and social expenditures and increasing unemployment could set off, against the insolvency that would result from continuing old policies. For example, in Britain, after the steep drop in the value of the pound, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said "that the

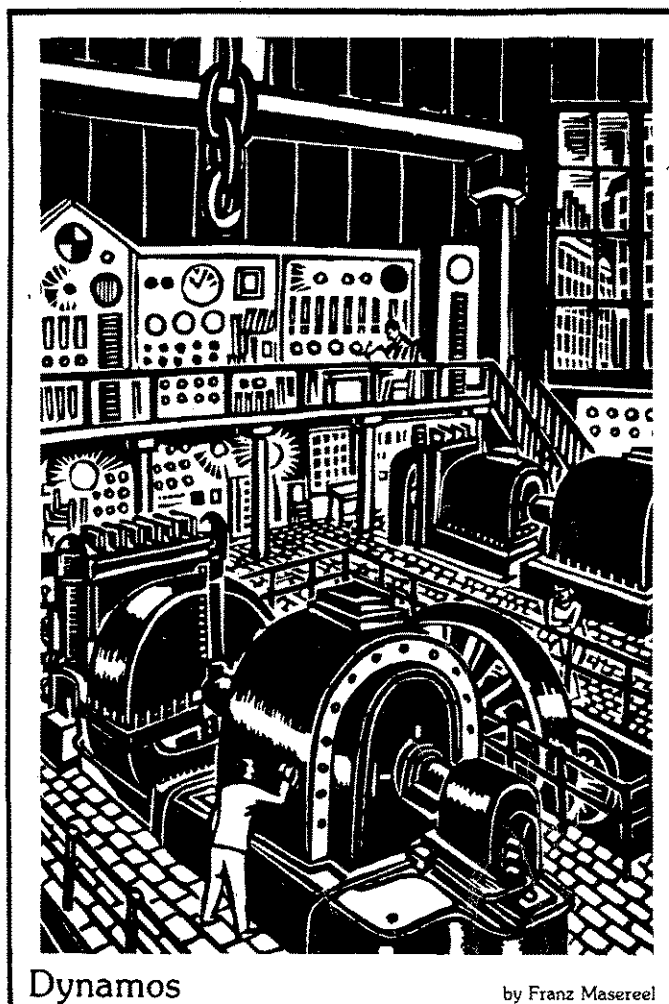
alternatives to going to the International Monetary Fund for a further loan would be 'economic policies so savage that they would lead to riots in the streets'." (22) Nevertheless, the IMF loan entailed further cuts in social service expenditures; full employment has become a relic of the past and the welfare state is being dismantled.

That the Chancellor wasn't being just rhetorical is substantiated by the fact that his scenario was quickly realized in Egypt, where in January a boost in government controlled prices of food and fuel — a measure taken to meet requirements of the IMF — actually did lead to riots in the streets. The Polish riots of 1976 were another version of this scenario; they were set off by price rises occasioned by Poland's loans coming due. Afterwards, in November, Brezhnev loaned Poland \$1.3 billion "when Polish leaders convinced him that without help the worker uprising of last August would be only a prelude to a repeat of the working class rebellion of 1956." (23) In general, capital now has to perilously expand credit beyond all previous norms where and when it feels its power to raise the rate of exploitation is limited and will run up against too much working class resistance.

Currently in Britain, some union leaders have been arguing that the fact that inflation has been rising since last summer, despite wage restraint, proves that wage increases do not initiate the inflationary spiral. Now pressure from the rank and file has subverted attempts at renewal of the agreement between the TUC and the Labour government on wage restraint, and the possibility of a new "wage explosion" threatens to throw the crisis-ridden British economy even deeper into crisis. (24)

The conditions in all other countries are, of course, not identical to those in Britain and Italy, but the dynamic is similar enough for us to generalize with regard to the issue under discussion. In the late 60's capital found itself in the position of having increased expectations without having surmounted the economic contradictions which limit its production of wealth. Since it could not generate profits sufficient for profitable expansion of private capital on the basis of a renewal of the productive plant, capital had to both expand the unproductive spheres and simultaneously endeavor to increase productivity through rationalization and increasing the intensity of labor. However, working class resistance to productivity schemes grew. Simultaneously, income demands grew. The re-assertion of capitalism's "internal contradictions" met the re-assertion of working class militancy. As a result, capital has had to completely change its ideological tune; "affluence" and "rising expectations" have given way to "zero growth" and "small is beautiful." And a social reality is being constructed to match the ideology.

On the empirical level what we find are individual capitalists or corporations or nations, each intent on maintaining its competitive position, primarily by raising productivity while keeping the lid on wage rates and other expenses it may consider flexible (such as social welfare programs). Internationally, the competition appears in the form of trade imbalances and ensuing monetary crises that put the now internationally interdependent economy in jeopardy. All of these matters, which the bourgeoisie understand as "economic", can be said to simultaneously express and mask both the class struggle and the contradictory process of capital accumulation. In a certain sense, a sense that doesn't invalidate the marxian viewpoint, it is *all* a matter of class struggle, since the capital



Dynamos

by Franz Masereel

accumulation process is based on historically specific production relations which were established and are maintained by a complex mix of physical and ideological manipulation and violence. However, the particular struggles of sections of the working class, and their relationship to the specificities of particular units of capital — all this develops, not accidentally but, from the marxian perspective, in the context of an inexorable, contradictory capital-accumulation process which can be grasped theoretically on the basis of an analysis of the "total capital," i.e. on a level of analysis which abstracts from competition, if only to be able ultimately to work up to it by a series of approximations.

For the Marxist, the struggle between workers and bosses within various units of capital has to be understood in the context of the heightened international competition of the late 60's and the 70's. Heightened competition is characteristic of crisis conditions wherein capitalists struggle over a pool of surplus-value which is dwindling relative to their needs for profitable capital investment at the particular level of capital accumulation.

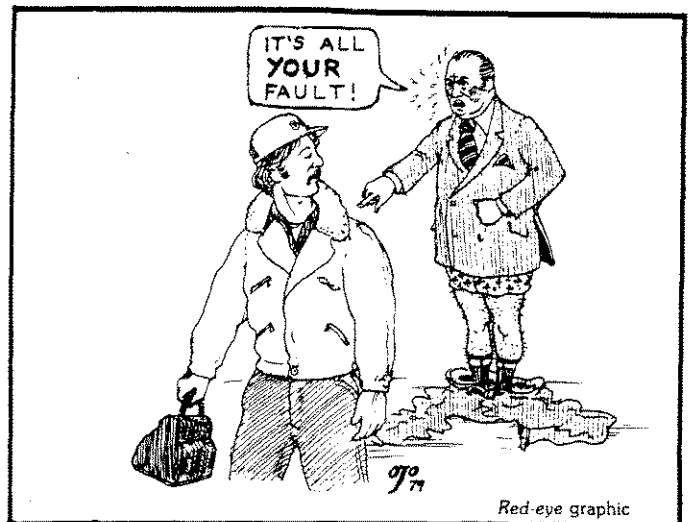
Particular nations jockey for a share of existing surplus-value sufficient to allow for further accumulation. But the crisis of capital is nothing but an insufficiency of the total surplus-value

relative to the amount necessary for both productive investment and unproductive expenditures. As a result, in each nation, Britain more than others because of its poor competitive position, the struggle over the division of the existing surplus-value among its three functions—constant capital (plant, equipment and materials), variable capital (wages of productive workers), and revenue (capitalists' income and unproductive expenditures)—intensifies.

If, for theoretical purposes, we treat as secondary the struggle between capitalists and workers over how much labor is actually supplied for how much income, we can uncover what Mattick calls "the objective conditions in which the class struggle must evolve and determine its orientation"; that is, in this case, the context of economic stagnation and the fact that state intervention, rather than solving this problem, turns it into a problem of cancerous growth of unproductive expenditures. Finally, if, following Marx, we trace the economic stagnation back to the tendency of the rate of profit to fall and the limits of the counter-tendencies, that is, back to the internal contradictions of capitalism, we can understand why the capitalist class is incapable of delivering the goods, of satisfying the demands of a militant working class, and why, on the contrary, it must periodically attack the living standards of the working class and endeavor to increase the amount of surplus-value it pumps out of each unit of labor-time.

As "objective" as this sort of analysis appears, in that it is developed in abstraction from class struggle, nevertheless it leaves room for the "subjective" in that it shows how the basis of relative class harmony must break down and aims to put into question the capital relation itself. It abstracts from class struggle in order to show that the crisis of profitability, the context in which the struggle develops, is *inherent* in the development of the capital-relation. There are limits to organizing production and thus, indirectly, all social life, by means of the capital-relation, by means of wage-labor. Such a system results in a multi-faceted degradation of work and life, including at times serious decline in many people's material well-being.

However, even if this objective approach holds up theoretically, its limits must be recognized. Capitalism, as it develops (and decays), transforms the labor-process and life in general, and, as a result, the character and forms of revolt change also. Strategy and organization are historically specific. The belief in or proof of capitalism's inability to surmount its internal



contradictions at best sets the stage for understanding the specific character of the present crisis, the specific character of present struggles and the relation between the two. If the crisis offers "the possibility of a transformation of the class struggle within the society into a struggle for another form of society", it remains to be shown how this possibility can become a reality. What we need to do is 1) show how the intensified struggle over the rate of exploitation can actually become, or is in the process of becoming, a revolutionary struggle overflowing the bounds of the capital relation, how it can turn into a struggle *against* wage-labor, and 2) participate in this transformation.

"Critique" . . . includes from the point of view of the *object* an empirical investigation, "conducted with the precision of natural science," of all its relations and development, and from the point of view of the *subject* an account of how the impotent wishes, intuitions and demands of individual subjects develop into an historically effective class power leading to "revolutionary practice." (*Praxis*, Jan., July 1977). (25)

Footnotes

1. Paul Mattick, "Marxism and Monopoly Capital," *Progressive Labor*, July-August, 1967, reprinted as a pamphlet by Root and Branch, Box 236, Somerville, Mass 02143; and Mario Cogoy, "Les theories neo-marxistes, Marx et l'accumulation du capital", *Les Temps Modernes*, Sept.-Oct., 1972, pp. 396-427.

2. Here I'm using Mattick as a paradigm of "the Marxist" and reserving questions about the full adequacy of his analysis of the "internal contradictions." Castoriadis' thesis is developed most extensively in *Modern Capitalism and Revolution*, available from Solidarity, c/o 123 Lathom Road, London E. 6. (also from P.O. Box 1587, San Francisco, Ca. 94101) *Zerowork* is available from: c/o Mattera, 417 E. 65th St., New York, N.Y. 10021. All reference is to issue #1; a second issue has just appeared. See Peter Rachleff's review of *Zerowork* in *Fifth Estate*, Nov., 1976. A very similar perspective can be found in *Les ouvriers contre l'Etat, refus du travail* (Martin Andler, B.P. 42.06, 75261, Paris Cedex 6). Also see Robert Cooperstein, *The Crisis of the Gross National Spectacle* (P.O. Box 950,

Berkeley, Ca.). Glyn and Sutcliffe's book is discussed by Yaffe in "The Crisis of Profitability: a Critique of the Glyn-Sutcliffe Thesis," *New Left Review*, #80, 1973.

3. Only later to break with Marxism.

4. Nevertheless, Korsch was quite critical of crisis theorists like Mattick's mentor, Henryk Grossman.

5. The rate of exploitation is the ratio of surplus-value to variable capital.

6. *Zerowork*, #1, pp. 2-6

7. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

8. In response, it could be argued that Yaffe presents the rise in unproductive expenditures as an "objective" economic development, following Mattick, but that in fact the rise in unproductive expenditures has occurred at least in part because

of past, present or potential working class struggle. The rise in social services and the increase in state production have occurred because the working class won through struggle the principle of full employment and basic social welfare. As Yaffe himself says, the main purpose of social services is to maintain social stability. "Unproductive expenditures," then, in large part, are the way that class struggle is obscured as a causative factor and becomes an "objective" economic category.

9. Cf. for example, Brecher and Costello, *Common Sense for Hard Times*, 1976.

10. Here the distinction and relationship between two meanings of "productivity" is important. For Marx, increasing productivity means increasing the product of a given amount of labor; for bourgeois economists it means increasing the product of a given amount of labor-time ("output per man-hour"). The importance of this is that the bourgeois concept does not distinguish between increases in output per man-hour due to improved technology and those due to speedup. In the 60's and 70's, generally speaking, the lag in productivity in the marxian sense has led capitalists to try to increase output per man-hour by intensifying labor, i.e. by getting more labor out of each unit of labor-time. Often the two are interconnected, as when the introduction of assembly-line methods not only increases the productive power of labor but forces workers to quicken their pace of work. However, where and when technological development lags, as in British and Italian industry in the 60's and 70's, the emphasis is placed on intensification of labor. See discussion below.

12 Taylor himself claimed that scientific management would make "high wages and low labor costs...not only compatible, but...in the majority of cases mutually conditional." Quoted in Yaffe, op.cit., from F.W. Taylor, *Shop Management*, 1903, pp.21-2.

11. *Capital*, Vol. I, p. 763.

13. Alan Jones, "Britain on the Edge of the Abyss," *Inprecor*, no 40/41, Dec., 1975, pp. 36-8. I don't mean to reduce social struggles to the struggle over the rate of exploitation. Although May 1968 did break a wage freeze, this is hardly its outstanding characteristic; indeed, the effect of May 1968 on wages was the result of the recuperation of struggles which went far beyond the wage issue.

14. Paul Mattick, "Zur Marxschen Akkumulation—und Wudsmmenbruchstheorie", in *Ratekorrespondenz*, 4, 1934, quoted in De Masi and Marramao, "Councils and State in Weimar Germany", *Telos* No. 28, 1976. By Marramao, also see "Theory of the Crisis and the Problem of Constitution", *Telos*, No. 26, 1976, which discusses matters relevant to the issue at hand.

15. Paul Mattick, "Preface" to Henryk Grossman, *Marx, L'economie politique classique et le probleme de la dynamique*, Editions Champ Libre, 1975, pp. 24-5.

16. Geoffrey Kay, "The Falling Rate of Profit, Unemployment and Crisis", *Critique* no. 6, 1976, p. 75. In this article Kay sets out to discredit the theory of the falling rate of profit. I

should explain that I am neither convinced of the truth of all Marx's economic theories, e.g., the theory of the falling rate of profit, nor am I an opponent of those theories. I am concerned here not primarily with determining whether one or another theory of crisis is true or false but with comparing different approaches to the present historical conjuncture. I have no pretensions to be offering definitive conclusions.

Besides Kay's, another interesting critique of the theory of the falling rate of profit is Geoff Hodgson's: "The Theory of the Falling Rate of Profit", *New Left Review* #84, March-April, 1974. A group which defends the theory and economic perspectives close to Mattick's, is: Communist Workers Organization (address correspondence to: C.W.O., c/o 21 Durham St., Pelaw, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE10 OXS, England).

In Geoffrey Kay's discussion of Yaffe, he suggests that the intellectual attractiveness of the classical marxian argument is reason to be skeptical of it. The same could be said of the political attractiveness of the view that the working class imposes the crisis. It makes the working class appear as powerful as we would like it to be. One political argument in favor of Mattick is that his view can be used in opposition to ruling class arguments that all will benefit in the long run if workers tighten their belts and work harder and give the capitalists a chance to restructure. For Mattick, such measures don't lead back to "Go"; capital is irretrievably in the "Jail" of low profitability. Even if workers' sacrifice kept things going for another cycle of accumulation, capitalism's problems would inevitably reappear and worsen.

17. J.B. Proctor and R. Proctor, "Capitalist Development, Class Struggle and Crisis in Italy, 1945-1975", *Monthly Review*, Vol. 27, no. 8, Jan., 1976, pp. 24-31.

18. Theleme Anarres, "Notes on Italy", *Solidarity*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 14-16.

19. Even this formulation is debatable. An article in *New Left Review* argues: "Neither the general rate of inflation (until 1971), nor the rate of increase in strikes was exceptional in the international terms, but the slow growth in productivity, real incomes and investment was. It was this weakness, the comparative weakness of British capital, not the relative strength of British working class, that constituted the real crisis point. . . . It is necessary to stress this (in opposition to) Glyn and Sutcliffe". *Class Struggle and the Heath Government*", *NLR*, Vol. 1973, p.27.

20. Richard Hyman, "Industrial Conflict and the Political Economy: Trends of the Sixties and Prospects for the Seventies", *The Social Register*, 1973, p. 112.

21. *Business Week*, Sept. 22, 1975, p. 96.

22. *The London Times*, Sept. 30, 1976.

23. Jon Steinberg, "Why a few dissidents are frightening leaders in the West as well as the East", *Seven Days*, vol. 1, no. 3, p. 10.

24. For an account of recent developments in Britain, see my article, "The Crisis of Wage Labor in Britain", in *Now and After* #2 (P.O. Box 1587, San Francisco, Ca.)

25. Karl Korsch, *Three Essays on Marxism*, Pluto Press, pp. 65-6